Chieftains of the Sangam Age

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FORWORD

I have great pleasure in bringing out the book on 'the Chieftains of the Sangam Age' written by Dr. K.D. Thirunavukkarasu. He was well known as a scholar of rare eminence. He made a close study of Thirukkural and had published 'Thirukkural Neethi Ilakkiyam'. 'Thirukkuralil Karpanai Thiranum Nadaga Nalanum' and 'Thirukkural Nuladaivu'.

Dr. K. D. Thirunavukkarasu was awarded the prize of Sahitya Akademi for his best contribution the 'Thirukkural Neethi Ilakkiyam'. He was popularly known as Thirukkural Mani'. 'Thirukkural Cittar', and 'Thirukkural Neri Thendral'. In 1978 Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M.G. Ramachandran the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu had honoured him for his best contribution on 'Rajaraja Chola the great' and he was also awarded the prize of Thiru. Vi. Ka. in the year of 1985.

He served for 17 years in the International Institute of Tamil Studies as in the capacity of an associate Professor, Professor and the Director. Dr K. D Thirunavukkarasu, a reputed professor of Tamil, was fully qualified in literary researches. He under took a great task in the research field and he achieved the impossible.

He published 35 books related to Tamil literature, History, Criticism, Drama, Translation, Comparative studies and Compilation. He was a follower of Arignar Anna and he has done Yeoman service inthe field of Tamil literature and History.

In this work he has made an intense study about the Chronology of the Chieftains.

I express my sincere thanks to the Director of International Institute of Tamil Studies for publishing this valuable work.

Madras
7—12—1994

Prof. K. PONNUSWAMY

1

The Survey of the Sources

The fragrance of a lotus is the sum total of the fragrance of the individual petals that compose the lotus. The composite beauty of Indian Culture and literature is the sum total of what has been achieved in different regional spheres. If the petals are plucked away, the lotus ceases to exist; if what has happened or has been achieved in the regional spheres is bypassed, the composite image of India gets distorted and disturbed.

From this stand point, the local or regional history has become important and interesting for the study of the cultural development in India. The political events which took place in Tamilnadu during the *Sangam* age had their influence on the fortunes of the South Indian Kingdoms.

The chieftains played an important role in the political arena of ancient *Tamilakam*. They were a powerful force in shaping the destiny of the three Tamil kingdoms of Tamilnadu. Some of them, earned name and fame as paragons of philanthrophy. Because of their patronage, ancient Tamils attained a high water-mark in the field of Fine Arts and a hoary tradition grew up around their names.

The history of these Chieftains will serve as links in the chain of the history and culture of the ancient Tamils. The history of these local chieftains will contribute in a large measure to the reconstructions of the history of ancient *Tamilakam*. In this context, it will be appropriate to recall the significant words of Dr. Fleet : "The history of the supreme dynasties would not be complete, without a detailed notice of

some of the more important feudatory families by the agency of which, the permanent Sovereigns carried on the administration of their dominions."[1]

This fact has been ignored by many historians, because of the dearth of materials, for a critical and comprehensive study and the problems with which they were confronted in the course of their survey. Now, we are in a more advantageous position than our fore-fathers. Almost all *Sangam* Classics are easily accessible to us. Some of the excavations conducted in Tamilnadu, have given some clues to the political and cultural history of our country. Besides, a team of scholars, who had a flair for reconstructing the history of the peninsular India, have done much of the spade-work in this field.

Availing myself of these advantages, I venture to survey the historical materials pertaining to the chieftains embedded in the *Sangam* literature and to present a clear and coherent picture of the part played by the chieftains of the ancient Tamilnadu. In the following pages, I have tried to explain as concisely as possible, the historical significance of the chieftaincies that formed part and parcel of ancient *Tamilakam.*

Sources

For the study of the ancient history of Tamilnadu, one has to rely mainly on the literature of the *Sangam* period. In addition to this, there are a few references to be found in the writings of the North Indian literature and in the travelogues of the Classical writers. Especially, the writings of Pliny, Ptolemy and the author of the Periplus are of immense help for our present study.

Sangam literature provides an amazing wealth of material concerning the social life of the Tamils and to a certain extent political conditions of ancient *Tamilakam.*

The term '*Sangam* literature' is very widely used to designate ancient Tamil literature produced prior to the fourth century of the Christian era. The word 'Sangam' here stands for a 'Literary Academy' and these Classics are the products

of the Tamil poets and bards who lived at a period when the activities of a literary body regulated and set the standards for the development of Tamil literature.

The Sangam Age

The probable age of the *Sangam* period has been a baffling question and the subject of serious controversy. Our knowledge of the Tamil *Sangam* is very meagre and defective. We have to rely upon the available information, direct and inferential, to determine the age of the *Sangam*.

In the Tamil country, the 7th and the 8th centuries A. D. witnessed the vigorous growth of Saivism and Vaishnavism which established their supremacy over heretic systems of Buddhism and Jainism. There is hardly any reference to the religious fermentation in *Sangam* literature. They reflect, a profound religious peace, unmarred by unseemly rivalry.

In *Tevaram* and *Nalayira Tivyap Prapantam,* there is a body of indirect evidence to the fact that the age of *Sangam* was anterior to the period of religious revival in *Tamilakam.*[2] It is significant to note that there is hardly any reference to the Pallavas of *Kanchi* in the *Sangam* Classics. On the other hand, there are many references to the liberality and military exploits of the three Tamil monarchs. But, during the period of Pallava supremacy, the three traditional Tamil Kings were not conspicuous.[3]

These indirect evidences can be complemented with the synchronism of *Cheran Senkuttuvan* with Gajabahu of Sri Lanka. The earliest Tamil epic *Cilappatikaram* refers to the king Gajabahu of Sri Lanka. This could be only the first of that name, as the other reigned in the first half of the 13th century and this one in the first half of the 2nd century A. D. The history of Ceylon, assigns Gajabahu I to the first half of the second century A. D.[4] *Senkuttuvan,* the Chera king, who is mentioned in the *Cilappatikaram* as the contemporary of Gajabahu is also celebrated by other *Sangam* poets like *Paranar.*

From the references found in *Sangam* literature, this Chera king seems to have lived in the middle of the *Sangam* age. There is ample testimony to the fact that at least five or six generations of kings might have lived after this Chera monarch. Hence, it is reasonable to regard the third century of the Christian era as the lower limit for the *Sangam* Age. [5]

This conclusion is quite in harmony with the data relating to the Tamil kingdoms supplied by the Classical writers such as the author of Periplus and Ptolemy. The remarkable finds of the Roman coins in South India, belong to the early period of the Roman Imperialism. With the fall of the Roman empire at the fag-end-of the third century A. D, there was a setback to the trade relations of *Tamilakam* with Rome. After a long period of peace and prosperity that pervaded *Tamilakam*, the three great Tamil kingdoms began to decline, owing to the unceasing internecine warfare and lack of unity among them. During this time *Kavirippumpattinam*, the great emporium of trade in the Eastern seas appears to have partially submerged into the sea. This great calamity has synchronised with the political upheaval of the Tamil country.

On the ashes of the Satavahana empire, Pallavas laid foundation in the southern parts of the Andhra country towards the middle of the fourth century A. D. [6] The rise of the Pallavas resulted in pushing the *Kalabhras* to the south. They penetrated into *Tamilakam* by plundering and massacaring thousands of people. During this period, there were no strong government in the northern border of *Tamilakam* to resist their attack and to drive them back. So, they easily occupied *Tondaimandalam* and then gradually proceeded upto *Madurai* in the South. The invasion of the *Kalabhras* into Tamil land, gave the *coup-de-grace* to the three traditional Tamil kingdoms. The disintegration of *Tamilakam* into different units and the natural calamities which befell on *Tamilakam* resulted in famine and frustration of the Tamil people.

From that time onwards, the history of *Tamilakam* was shrouded in mystery till the beginning of the 7th Century

A. D. In the light of the above facts, we can fix this period, i.e, the fag-end of the 3rd century A. D. as the probable lower limit for the *Sangam* Age.

But the beginning of the *Sangam*, i.e., the *Sangam*, the *Par Excellence* is yet to be decided. The earliest Tamil Classics we now have, represent a comparatively late stage of literary development. "Their language is not the spoken language of the common man, but a strictly refined and conventionalized one. These early odes, obey strict metrical rules and what is much more remarkable, exhibit a highly complicated scheme of literary convention"[7] For this sophisticated development of Tamil language, we find from the comparative study of the other literatures of the world, at least three or four centuries of literary activities might have preceeded.

In *Tolkapplam*, the earliest Tamil grammar now extant, we find that the three kingdoms of Tamilnadu were in a flourishing condition.[8] This bears ample testimony to the fact that there was much scope for the patronage and promotion of literary activities in Tamilnadu.

We are able to get some information regarding the three Tamil kingdoms from an unexpected source. The *Hathlgumpha* inscription of *Kharavela*[9] gives a list of the heroic exploits of the king. In his eleventh regnal year, Kharavela refers to a 'Dramila Sangatha', i.e., a confederation of Tamil states which had been in existence for 113 years and was a source of danger to him. what will be the reason for the formation of a confederacy ? The gleanings from the *Sangam* literature give us a clue. There are four references to the Mauryan invasion of the Tamilnadu.[10] In order to face the mighty Mauryas, it is probable that the three Tamil kings might have formed themselves into a confederacy. Then what could be the period for the formation of this confederacy ? we have to depend upon the lithic record of Kharavela for this point. The probable date of Kharavela's inscription has been fixed as 165 B. C. His coronation might have taken place in 176 B. C.[11] In his 11th regnal year, he mentions that there was a confederacy of the Tamil kings in existence for the

last 113 years, If we can accept the authenticity of his statement, then the formation of the confederacy might have taken place about 278 B.C. This date falls within the reign of Bindusara, the Mauryan monarch who turned his army against the South, according to the Tibetan historian Taranatha's testimony. The Mauryan invasion of South India, was probably an ultimate failure as far as the traditional Tamil states were concerned, which consequently formed no part of Asoka's empire. [12]

From these evidence, we can infer that during the period of Mauryan supremacy, there was a well developed cultural *milieu* in the Tamil land and also well established government under the three traditional dynasties of *Tamilakam.* This is also confirmed by some other evidences such as the writings of Megasthenes [13] and *Kaudilya.* [14]

The inscriptions of Asoka, especially the Major Rock Edict II, makes reference to the well established kingdoms of *Tamilakam* as,

"Everywhere in the empire of the Beloved of the Gods, the King Piyadessi and even in the lands on its frontiers, those of the Cholas, Pandiyas, *Satyaputras* and *Keralaputras* and as far Sri Lanka......every where, the two medical services of the Beloved of the Gods, the King Piyadessi have been provided."[15]

The 13th Major Rock Edict of Asoka, also refers to the Cholas, and Pandiyas of Tamil country, where he has gained vtctory by Dharma. From these inscriptions, it is clear that the three Tamil kingdoms were independent states, beyond the frontiers of Mauryan empire.

With the missionaries of Asoka, Buddhism came to Tamilnadu and found a congenial atmosphere to take deep-roots in this part of India. The conspicuous absence of Buddhist thought in *Tolkappiam* [16] and the gradual increase of Buddhistic doctrines and traditions in the *Sangam* classics tend to support that the upper limit of the *Sangam* Age as the 3rd century B. C. which synchronizes with Asoka's Edicts and

Kharavela's observations. We have put together the scraps of available information direct and inferential to determine the probable age of the *Sangam*, its begining as the third century B. C. and its end as the third century A. D.

Historical Value of Sangam Classics

Against this chronological background outlined above, the historical value of the different classes of early Tamil literature may be assessed. Traditionally, *Sangam* classics are classified as *Tokaiyum Pattum* by the commentators of *Tolkappiam.*[17] *Tokai* is the anthology and this term refers to *Ettutokai* or the Eight Anthologies. *Pattu* signifies, the anthology of ten longer poems, which is known as *Pattuppattu* or the Ten Idylls.

The *Sangam* classics are classified as *Akam* and *Puram. Akam* is generally treated as the poetry of love and *Puram* as the poetry of heroism. Among the Eight Anthologies, the *Purananuru* and *Patirrupattu* are classified as the poetry of heroism and the *Paripadal* is considered to be the composition of these two aspects of literature. The remaining works of these anthologies viz., *Ainkurunuru. Kuruntokai, Narrinai, Akananuru* and *Kalittokai* are the works of love poems. A remarkable feature of the *Puram* poems is that they deal with situations in a subjective and realistic manner. These poems are of the conventional pattern either in their themes or in their treatment of the subject.

In *Purananuru* and *Patirruppattu,* we have a mine of information regarding the heroic exploits of the kings and chieftains of ancient *Tamilakam.* In *Purananuru* there are 164 direct references to fifty nine chieftains and princes, which are the only main source of information for our study. There is also fourteen references to seven tribal communities. These poems are the outpouring of the court-bards, or of the poets, in accordance with the literary conventions of that age, who regarded themselves as bards eulogising a chief or King. They are known as panegyric or the court poetry.

About 59 chieftains are lauded in the anthology of *Purananuru,* only nine of them are treated in more than four poems each.

In other words, the lives of the rest are very obscure. The nine chieftains take up 88 poems out of 200 which is about half of the total number of poems praising the chieftains. Besides this, 121 poems have defective colophons, and owing to this, their heroes are unknown.

Following this hoary tradition, Ten poets celebrated the heroic exploits of ten Chera Kings in ten poems. This work is called *Patirruppattu* or Tentens. Only 8 tens are now extant. There is a preface to every ten of this work. There are 74 historical allusions, out of which thirty give graphic accounts about eleven chieftains, two tribal communities and two territorial tribes of that period. In *Paripadal,* we are able to find only 8 historical allusions, which are related only to the *Pandiyan* Kings.

Besides these three anthologies, we are fortunate to get a considerable number of historical allusions in the *Akam* works. Eventhough, these anthologies contain poems that represent the dramatic monologues of the lovers, their companions and the heroine's nurse, there are copious references to the historical events and social customs of ancient *Tamilakam* which were very fresh in the minds of the poets. But, they are not as full and vivid in these respects as the *Puram* works in general.

The following table will give a clear picture of the historical materials found in the works of the love poems.

HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS IN THE SANGAM LITERATURE

Works	Number of Historical Allusions	Number of Chieftains	Number of instances	Allusions to the Kings & other persons
1. *Ainkurunuru* (Five centuries of short verses)	17	3	3	14
2. *Kuruntokai* (Short Anthology)	30	23 (16+7)	26	4
3. *Narrinai* (The Good Anthology)	60	23 (19+4)	34	24
4. *Akananuru* (Anthology of longer love poems)	288	56 (46+10)	152	136
5. *Kalittokai* (Odes 150)	24	—	—	24

The next important work of the *Sangam* Classics is the Ten Idylls or *Pattuppattu.* Out of these ten longer poems, three poems viz. *Cirupan-Arruppadai, Perumpan Arruppadai* and *Malaipadukadam* are the panegyrics in praise of the three chieftains *Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan, Nalliyakkodan* and *Nannan*, the son of *Nannan.* Besides these three, there are three other poems which give a vivid account of the heroic exploits of the Chola King *Karikala* and the Pandiya King *Neduncelliyan,* the victor of *Talayalankanan.* In these longer poems, there are 27 references, to 12 chieftains and princes. In addition to these references, 9 tribal communities are mentioned in 13 places.

From these *Sangam* classics, we are able to glean some glimpses of the political history of ancient *Tamilakam,* especially the life and activities of the princes and chieftains. The *Sangam* literature discloses that the poets and minstrels on several occasions made successful attempts in preventing bloody feuds and internecine war fare, helped to safeguard the life of the princelings, gave counsel to the rulers on administration and diplomacy, and restored the kings and chieftains to the path of virtue, whenever they tended to go astray. There is no doubt that many of these pictures drawn by the poets of the age are in accordance with the literary conventions; but such conventions must have been nurtured on a fairly solid foundation in the facts of contemporary life.

It will be a tribute to mention that a considerable number of the poets in the *Sangam* age were patronized by the chieftains and princes. Out of 473 poets of the *Sangam* period, 144 poets have eulogised their patrons in their poems. Among them 86 poets have sung the glories of these Chieftains in 502 instances.[18]

The principal drawback of the data provided by the *Sangam* Classics is that a continuous political history of the dynasties of that age, cannot be constructed, for it is difficult to determine the genealogy or chronological relationship of the Chieftains who figure in these Classics.

NOTES

1. J. F. Fleet, Dynasties of Canarase Districts, Vol. 2; P. 535
2. Appar Tevaram, Tirupputtur Tiruttantakam, 3. Sampantar Tevaram, Tiruttevur Tevaram, 1. Periyalvar Tirumoli, 10: 4. Andal, Tiruppavai, 30.
3. T. V. Mahalingam, Kancipuram in Early South Indian History, P. 18.
4. S. Paranavitana, History of Ceylon, P. 122.
5. M. Rajamanikkam, Tamil Moli Ilakkiya Varalaru, P. 44.
6. T. V. Mahalingam, Op. Cit; P. 37.
7. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, History of the Tamils, P. 150.
8. Tol. Porul; 390.
9. K. P. Jayaswal, An Imperial History of India, P. 16.
10. Akam 69, 251, 281; Puram 175.
11. K. P. Jayaswal, Op. Cit; PP. 16-17
12. R. S. Sathianathier, History of India, Vol. 1; PP. 108-109.
13. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (Ed), Foreign Notices of South India, P. 42.
14. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, A Comprehensive History of India, Vol. 2, Mauryas and Satavahanas, P. 499
15. Romila Thapar, Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas, P. 251.
16. R. Raghava Aiyengar, *Tamil Varalaru,* P. 277.
17. *Tol. Porul,* 392, Peraciriyar Com and Nacei Com.
18. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai (ed); *Sanga Ilakkiyam,* Reprint, Vol. 2; App. PP 1436-1459.

2

Origin of the Chieftaincies

In ancient India, there was no empire in the sense, in which we speak of 'Roman Empire' or 'British Empire'. Whenever a great person came to the political arena, he claimed to be the overlord of a number of states and his overlordship was acknowledged by the payment of tributes yearly or occasional. Hence, the history of Tamilnadu from the earliest times is largely the history of small kingdoms and principalities.[1]

Social organisation

In the history of the world, the earliest social organisation was tribal in character and the form of the government was monarchical. In the pre-historic period, people in South India were divided into a number of tribes, the main differences between them were largely due to their geographical environment. They were known as hunters, pastoralists, agriculturists, those on the sea shore and those in the desert region. After a long period of evolutionary process, the social organisation among the pastoral and the agricultural people took a definite shape which led to the emergence of political organisations From that time onwards, monarchy was the only form of government prevalent among the Tamils.

1. Chieftains: Etymological Implications

Before tracing the history of the chieftains, it is our duty to know 'who were the chieftains?' There are several terms in English to represent the chiefs of the tributary states, who rendered homage to the overlords or the kings. They are

'Vassals', 'Feudatories', 'Princes' and 'Chieftains'. Every one of these terms has its own etymological implications and historical background.

For our present study, I have preferred the term "Chieftains" to accommodate the various communities, clans, tribes, princes, warriors, patrons of arts and vassals who were very powerful in the political sphere of the ancient *Tamilakam*.

From the dawn of history, the Tamil country was divided among the three great political powers, the Cholas, Pandiyas, and the Çheras.[2] Besides, there were a number of chieftaincies in the area, some of them tribal in character, owing allegiance to one or other of the three major powers. But the political or administrative relations between them was loose without any kind of cohesion or integration.

2. Nomenclatures for the Chieftains in Tamil

The Kings are known by the term *Ventar, Aracar, Mannar,Kon* or *Ko*[3], *Korravan, Iraivan*[4] etc. Among these terms, *Ventu* or *Ventar* has some significance in this context. *Ventar* were those who wore a crown-*Veyntor*.[5] Only the three crowned kings of *Tamilakam* were known as *Ventar*. Their crowns were known as *Nedumudi,* i.e. long one in conical shape. *Kurumudi* seems to have been worn by the Chieftains.[6]

In contrast with this, the. Chieftains are called *Cirraracar, Kurunila Mannar*[7], *Ko*[8], *Koman*[9], *Kurumbu*[10] and *Velir.*[11] *Cirracar*[12] is a term commonly used in Tamil for a chleftain or a feudal lord in contrast with *Aracar*, Kings.[13] *Kurunila Mannar* meant the rulers of small stretches of land or region. The term *Mannar* denotes one who had earned 'a permanent foot-hold'[14] in the country, i.e. they are indirectly called landed aristocrats.

But in common usage, *Mannar* without the epithet *Kurunilam* itself indicates the chieftains, whereas thc *Ventan* has been reserved to refer the crowned kings.[15] *Araiyars* is a corrupted form of *Araicu,* which in the mediaeval period denoted the feudal lords, e.g. *Paluvettu Araiyar*. The terms *Ko*, *Kon* and *Koman* in the earlier stage, usually referred to a king or a prince or those related

to the royal family. But, in course of time, the usage of *Ko, Kon* and *Koman* have been restricted to denote the princes and feudal lords. *Komakan* is the original form, meant to refer to the son of a king but it has been phonetically corrupted as *Koman*, like *Atiyarmakan* as *Atiyaman*[16] and *Perumakan* as *Peruman*, etc. The term *Kurumpu* literally refers to the fortress and in its elevated sense, denotes the guardians of the fortresses in the border land area. This brings home that some military chiefs were in charge of the fortresses in the outskirts of the kingdoms who had a tendency always to throw-off the authority of the suzerain power. In this context, it will be appropriate to quote from *Tirukkural* about this *Kurumpu*. *Valluvar* has realized that "a country is that which is free from numerous factions, subversive internal foes and murderous petty chieftains who harass the king."[18] He has given a suggestive attribute *Kol* to *Kurumpu*, i. e. *Kol-Kurumpo* which clearly expresses that they were not only murderous but also insubordinate. From this concept, the term *Kurumpu* acquired its popular meaning i.e. insubordinate chieftains.[19]

The term *Velir*, is the plural form of the word VEL, like *Makalir*, the plural of *Makal*.[20] The term *Velir* is an attribute applied to the chieftains who ruled over the different parts of the Tamil land and enjoyed the privilege of giving their daughters in marriage to the three crowned kings of Tamilnadu. They were treated as important personalities next to the kings is borne out by the various references to them in the *Sangam* classics e. g.

> "Kings and *Velirs* enter the court by
> Saluting the over lord"[21]

The poet eulogises the Chera king *Kudakko Ilanceral Irumporai* as "the lord of the crowned kings and chieftains who rendered homages to him".

From the study of these terms, we can infer that the chieftains have played an important and significant role in the early history of ancient *Tamilakam*. The institution of kingship is an ancient one among the Tamils, which is revealed by the large number of words that denote simultaneously a king and a chieftain.

3. Origin of the Chieftaincies

The origin of the chieftaincies in ancient *Tamilakam* is not clear. The ancient Tamil people, noted that the surface of the habitable portions of the earth could be divided into four natural regions, which they called *Kurinci,* the mountainous country, *Mullai.* forest tracts, *Marutam,* the river-valley region fit for agricultural operations and *Neytal,* the sea-coast region. Between the forest and hilly tracts, they found the sandy desert land, which they called, the *Palai* region. They noticed that in each region was evolved a different kind of human culture. This division of earth into five kinds of land scape or regions was fundamental to the development of Tamil culture. In *Palai* evolved the nomadic stage in *Kurinci* the hunters stage, in Mullai the pastoral stage, in *Marutam,* the agricultural stage and in *Neytal* the fishing and maritine activities of the cultural development.

Authorities differ on the origin of the chieftaincies in Tamilnadu, Some would advance the 'theory of force' as the fundamental principle. Another group of scholars, would put forward the 'evolutionary theory' of the state. Of these two schools of thought, the evolutionary theory has given a clear picture for the probable origin of chieftaincies in ancient Tamilnadu.

Now, we take for consideration, the evolutionary theory advanced by K. N. Sivaraja Pillai :

''In all probability, the earliest form of Tamil rule of which, we are afforded some glimpses here and there in this literature was a sort of communal republic............Although we discover the *Pandya* and the Chera rulers as full-fledged kings, the origin of the Chola line of sovereigns throws considerable light on the primitive communal republics. The people seem to have existed as village communities under the direction of *Kilars* or village elders. The oldest member of the family had direction of affairs in his hands..............The term *Kilamai* means right of possession. This abstract concept is undoubtedly a later growth and should have denoted at first the right of the village elders or *Kilavar.* In course of time, the village

communities grew in number and size and then they held together as a union or comfederacy of a number of such communities, presided by a *Vel, Ko* or *King*. This *Vel* or *Ko* had a number of *Kilars* under him each representing a village. Though the *Kilars* and *Vels* were the executive heads and presidents of their respective village assemblies and confederacies, their powers were probably very limited in peace time by the authority of the general assemblies of the village. This, type of political organisation was wholly the result of the peaceful and settled condition of an agricultural community, organised for peaceful pursuits".[22]

This view gives us some clue to find out the probable origin of the chieftaincies. It shows that they are not the products of deliberate human contrivance, but have come into existences as the result of natural evolution. So, we can assume that the chieftaincies of *Temilakam* have come into the picture as a product of the geo-political conditions. It implies that it is a gradual and continuous development of the social orders of the early Tamils, out of a grossly imperfect beginning in the five natural regions.

One can find in the pages of the *Sangam* literature, that there were a large number of tribal communities under their mighty chiefs and various feudal lords who were the leaders of villages, warriors, generals, ministers and patrons of arts and letters. We can cite some of the instances as examples for this point :

Aaviyar Perumakan Pekan (Pattu 3:85)
Kuravar perumakan Erai (*Puram* 157)
Kalvar Perumakam Pulli (*Akam* 342)
Malavar Perunakan Mavan Ori (*Narr* 52)
Malavar Permakan Anci (*Puram* 88)

These references clearly indicate that *Anci, Pekan, Erai, Puili* and *Ori* were the chieftains of their respective tribes or clans. In the same way, we can give many examples of the feudal lords.

Aruvantai was the chief of *Ampar,* a village on the banks of *Kaviri,* in the Chola country.[23] He was known

as a chief of a fertile village and a patron of arts and letters. Hence, he has been called *Ampar Kilan Aruvantai*-In this phrase, the word *Kilan* requires some explanation. The chief of an agricultural tract has been called *Kilan*.[24] So this *Kilan* of *Ampar* must have been be the chief of that town, which is clearly corroborated by the evidence furnished by *Kalladanar* in *Purananuru* 385, as 'the lord of *Ampar* which is on the banks of *Kaviri*, known for its flourishing paddy fields.'

There were a number of warriors who were not only great soldiers in the battle-fields but also the chiefs of some villages. We know from *Sangam* literature, that there were at least 3 persons bearing the name *Palaiyan*. Among them, one was the chief of *Por*, a town in the Chola country. He was known to the ancient Tamils for his prowess and heroic deeds. [25] There was one *Nakan*, who was known as the warrior of pandiyan army and at the same time, he was the chief of the town *Nalai*. [26] He was a feudal lord who supplied arms and ammunitions to the Pandiyan king and in times of need hc actcd as an advisor to the ruler of the Pandiyan country. He might have been the general as well as a minister to the Pandiyan king.

If we admit the preface to each section of the *Patirru-Pattu* as a genuine one, then it is interesting to note that one *Kilan* of *Maiyur* was a minister to the Chera king *Kutakko Ilanceral Irumporai*, who happened to be his grandson through his daughter *Venmal Antuvan Cellai*, who was given in marriage to the Chera king *Kuttuvan Irumporai*.[27]

Those who have an elementary knowledge of Tamil literature, would have been well aware of the fact that these chieftains were the patrons of arts and letters in ancient *Tamilakam*. From this cursory glance at the *Sangam* literature, we learn that the chieftaincies of ancient *Tamilakam* might have evolved as a landed aristocracy, but in course of time, owing to the circumstances, the chiefs might have acted as soldiers, generals, ministers and so on. These chieftains exercised great powers of internal autonomy within their respective territories and owed some sort of nominal allegiance to the king.

NOTES

1. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, A History of the Tamils, PP. 146–7
2. *Tol. Porul.* 69 & 391; *Puram* 35; *Akam* 31; *Pattu. Perum.* 32—33.
3. There is some historic significance in this term. "Government was conceived as being similar to a herdsmen rearing his herd, helping it to feed, and protecting it from enemies ... the oldest Tamil word for a King is *Kon* or *Ko,* which means a cowherd. This implies that Kingship arose first in the pastoral stage of the evolution of human life". — P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, in *Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture* P. 31,
4. The term, *Iraivan* or *Irai* implies the meaning that one is omnipresent. First it denoted the 'King' and then God. In both of these senses, the term is used in the *Tirukkural. "Iraivarkku Uruti Payappatam Tutu"* (Tiruk. 690); *"Iraivan Porul Cernta Pukal"* (Tiruk. 5).
5. Vide: *Konrai Veynton* is a didactic work, composed by the poetess *Auvaiyar.*
6. *"Kurumudik Kutippirantor Mutaliyormay, Mudiyudai Ventarkku"* — Tol. Porul. 30, Nacc. Com.
7. *"Maramiku Cirappin Kuru Nila Mannar"* — *Pattu.* 6:776.
8. *"Atuman* emparicu *Aviyar Kove !"* — *Puram.* 147.
9. *"Annal En Koman"* — *Puram.* 95.
10. *"Kol Kurumpu"* — *Tiruk.* 735.
11. *Ton Mutir Velir* — *Akam.* 258.
    Velirul Vele — *Puram.* 201.
12. This is obviously a later usage, which is hardly found in the *Sangam* literature.

13. *"Aracar Ulaiyarakavum"* — *Puram*. 154.

14. *"Manniya peruma"* - *Puram*. 6.

15. *"Cirrur Mannan Nerunal Gnankar Ventuvidu Tolilodu Cenrananan"* — *Puram*. 319.

 Vide: Puram. 11, 21, 26, 157 and 312;
 Kali. 108 and 149;
 Pattu. 6: 14; 7: 87.

16. T. Burrow derives the word *Man* from *Makan; Atiyar* is the name of the people and the word *Man* is a shortened form of *Makan* (son) is added to this precisely as in *Cheraman* — Collected Papers on Dravidian Linguistics, P. 159.

17. *Akam*. 35,319; *Puram*. 386;
 Nar. 77.

18. *Tiruk*. 735.

19. This can be identified with the Sanskrit term *Aratta* for which, *Naccinarkiniyar*, the commentator of *Civakachintamani*, V. 1221, Comm.

20. *Puram*. 24 & 201;
 Akam. 135, 206, 258 and 331.
 Patir. 88; *Pattu*. 6:55; 10:165.

21. *Patir*. 83.

22. K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, The Chronology of the Early Tamils, PP. 192–193.

23. *Puram*. 385.

24. *Tivakara Nikandu*, P. 41; V. 6.
 Vide: Tamil Lexicon, P. 936.

25. *"Mari Ampin Malaittol Palaiyan Kaviri Vaippire Por Enna Venkottu Yanaip Por Kilavan"* *Akam*. 186.
 "Palaiyan Vet Vaithanan" — Nar. 10,

3

Rudiments of Feudalism

It will be a wrong hypothesis, if we call this political and economic structure of ancient *Tamilakam,* 'a feudal set up'. But there are some evidences that help us indirectly, to infer that there were some rudiments of feudal structure. In this context, it will be of immense help to recapitulate the observations made by Dr. A.L. Basham, with special reference to the feudal set up in ancient India.

"Authorities differ on the definition of a feudal system. Some would confine the term to the complex structure of contractual relations covering the whole of society from King to Villein, which prevailed in mediaeval Europe. Others use the term so loosely, that they apply it to any system where political power is chiefly in the hands of those who own land...... Ancient India had, however, a system of overlordship, which was quasi-feudal."[1]

Rudiments of Feudalism

In the light of the above facts, we can trace the characteristic features of feudalism in a broader perspective in the early history of ancient *Tamilakam*. According to Carl Stephenson, the oft-quoted authority on Mediaeval Feudalism, the roots of feudalism lay deep in the state and society which were "dominated by agriculture. The population tended to be sharply divided into two classes; an aristocracy of landlords and economically dependent peasants".[2]

In this respect, ancient Tamil state and society were based on the agricultural economy. There were two distinct classes among the people who were called kings and chieftains. They were the

owners of the lands of the country. There are a number of references to the peasants who were engaged in the agricultural activities. Even among the *Vellalas*, whose profession was agriculture, there was a distinction between the landowners and those who laboured hard in the fields[3]. The land owners seem to be the aristocrats who depended upon the peasants for their main source of income. From these landed aristocracy, some chieftains rose to the power and prestige of feudal lords or otherwise called *Velirs*.

Fief

The next important aspect of feudalism is the system of land tenure and personal relationship in which land is held in *Fief* by vassals from lords to whom they owe specific services and with whom, they are in a bond of personal loyalty.

During the *Sangam* period, there were a number of chiefs who were tributaries to the three Tamil Kings. In *Purananuru*, one can find a number of references to the internecine warfare, between the kings and their feudatories. The reason for these feuds had been the negligence of the chieftains to pay tribute or breaking the bond of personal loyalty.. The Chera King besieged the fort of *Takadur* and killed the chieftain *Atikaman Elini*[4]. Similarly, the *Malayaman Tirumudikkari* of *Kovalur* was defeated by *Killivalavan*, the Chola King, for his disloyal activities to the Chola throne.[5] These two instances may be cited as evidence for breaking the bond of personal loyalty by a vassalage to his overlord.

Concept of 'Atipatya'

In this context, we must not forget the concept of *Atipatya* or the overlordship, which was the aim of the kings of ancient India. Whenever a king conquered a feudal territory, he was not expected to annex it to his kingdom, but to allow the feudal state to function as an autonomous state under his over-lordship.[6] This has been the reason for the rise of a fairly large number of feudatory states. Their number increased, when the senior posts of divisional or provincial governors began to become hereditary. *Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan* and *Karikala* were contemporaries. In *Pattinappalai*, there is a reference to the suzerainty of the

Chola King over the *Aruvaler* which may mean the subjection of *Tondaiman*. If our assumption is correct, then we can say that *Ilantiraiyan* was the vassal or a chieftain under *Karikala*.[7]

Control of the Feudatories

The control, which the paramount power exercised, naturally varied with the status of the feudatories and its own capacity to check him when the feudal lord *Kari*, who was a vassal to the Chola Kings broke his loyalty to the over-lord, wore a crown and declared himself as *Tirumudikkari*, virtually an independent ruler. The Chola King taught him a lesson by defeating *Kari* in a pitched battle[9]. Hence, we understand that general obedience to the imperial orders was expected and in some cases exacted. The feudatories were usually required to acknowledge their subordinate position in their official records, they issued by mentioning the name of their overlord first. One *Malaiyaman Tirukkannan* was not only a feudatory to the Chola King, but he was also a military chief of the Chola Kingdom. He had the title *Malaiyaman Coliya Enati Tirukkannan*.[10] The poet praises him as a great warrior who had won a victory for the Chola King, when the king was in exile and made him the king of the Chola country.

Subjugation of the Chieftains

When the empire builders of ancient *Tamilakam*, such as *Karikala*, *Cheran Senguttuvan* and *Nedunceliyan*, the victor of *Talaiyalankanam* rose to power, the Chieftains were subdued and their paramountacy was accepted. In consolidating his state, and rooting out his enemies, *Karikala* fought three important battles. In the Vennil war, he waged war against the two kings and eleven *Velirs* (chieftains). At *Kalumalam* he gave a crushing defeat to the seven chieftains. They were *Nannan*, *Errai*, *Atti*, *Kangan*, *Katti*, *Punrurai* and *Palaiyan*[12]. In another battle, probably at *Vakaipparantalai* nine rulers with their umbrellas, could not stand before him[13].

Cheran Senguttuvan, on behalf of his relative, a Chola prince called *Killi* fought against 9 rulers and defeated them in a single day itself.[14]

Nedunceliyan defeated the Chola and Chera kings and the five chieftains (*Titiyan, Elini, Erumaiyuran, Irunko Venman* and *Porunan*) at the battle of *Talaiyalankanan.*[15]

Homage to the Overlord

After these three battles, those who were defeated, rendered homage to their conquerors and accepted the suzerainty of their overlords. By rendering homage, the cheiftains and the kings retained their throne. Thus the feudal system in *Tamilakam* was different from that of Europe. In Europe, at the beginning of the tenth century, there were over-lordships but no states. The king was nothing but a "higher suzerain", at the peak of feudal pyramid.[16]

The degrees of control of the paramount ruler over vassal varied much. The vassal was expected to pay regular tribute to his king and to assist him with troops and funds in the time of war. There are some references to this kind of help, rendered by the chieftains to their overlord. *Valluvan* of *Nancil* hills, was famous for his patronage of the bards, poets and artistes. He had received profusely presents and other things as a vassal from the king. In turn, he was ready to loose his life in favour of his overlord.[17]

Another cheiftain called as *Nakan* of *Nalai*, who was a vassal to the *Pandiyan* ruler was well known for his heroism and munificence. He seems to have supplied troops whenever the king was in need of that and he was also a good counsellor or a minister to his overlord.[18]

Qualities of a vassal

Personal devotion, loyalty, the vassal's spirit of sacrifice, the suzerain's patronage were the deep and lasting foundations of the feudal set up.

There are a few specific references in the *Sangam* literature to the personal devotion, loyalty and the spirit of sacrifice of the vassal's and warrior's to the overlord. A king was having a feast before the battle; mead was being served;

pointing to a young warrior, Poetess *Auvlyaar* addressed her lord thus:

> "O valiant fighter! possessing well made chariots and groups of male elephants, share with this chief, the mead you drink. For his father's father gave up his life protecting your father's father and was pierced by lance like an axle-box; and this youth, so full of glory and valour, will shield your enemy's spears like an umbrella that keeps off the rain."[19]

This piece of evidence is enough, to show the personal devotion and loyalty of the warriors and chieftains to their overlord. Another oft-quoted poem by *Okkur Macattiyar*, who have expressed the heroic spirit of a mother of warrior clan, endowed with rare courage. The mother, on hearing the war drum, she was overfilled with joy and gave her only son a bright white cloth to wear, combed his hair and placing a lance into his hand, bade him to the battle-field, without any sense of sorrow for loosing her brother and husband in the battle field for the past two days.[20] Though this poem refers to warrior clan, this may be considered as one of the principles of feudalism.

Benefice

To encourage unflinching devotion and personal loyalty among the feudal chiefs, the suzerain used to grant land for his vassals. The grant or allotment of land is called 'benefice'. In ancient *Tamilakam* the grant of land to a warrior or a chieftain was known as *Tannadai Nalkal*, which means that 'granting the wet land'.[21] In *Purananuru Ponmutiyar*, the poetess of the warrior clan, have declared the duties of the citizens of the Tamil country. She has said that,

> "It is her duty to rear a strong young one, the duty of the father to make him noble, that of the iron-smith to make his war-worthy spears, that of the king to grant 'benefice' to the young warrior, whose duty is to wield the sword against a frightful elephant and return victoriously."[22]

one may think whether to interpret the reference to a soldier or a warrior is applicable to the chieftains in general. Students of literature aware are of the literary convention in an heroic age, which immortalize only the warriors, chieftains and kings for their heroic exploits. *Sangam* age has been called the 'Heroic Age' of Tamilnadu by Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and some other scholars.[23] So, we can presume that these references are also applicable to the chieftains.

Adorning the Court of the Over-lord

The chieftains attended their overlord's court is attested by the references made by two important poets of that age. In the court of the Chera king, the kings and Velirs paid their tributes which is clearly expressed in unmistakable terms.

In the great assembly of *Neduncel/iyan*, the young *Kocar* and the chieftains who were famous for their heroism have thronged together to pay tributes and render homage to their lord.[24] We can cite some more references to this fact.[25] These instances bear ample testimony, to the custom among the chieftains to attend the courts of their overlord and renew their loyalty by rendering homage to him.

Matrimonial Alliance

In some cases, the vassals gave their daughters in marriage to their paramount ruler. We have noticed earlier that the *Maiyur Kilan* gave his daughter *Venmal* to *Kuttuvan Irumporai*.[26] In the same manner, there are five more evidences to this custom in *Patiruppattu* itself.[27] Even in the Middle Ages, there was a tradition about the marriage alliance of Chola kings of the *Sangam* period with their Chieftains has been recorded by *Naccinarkkiniyar* the erudite scholar and eminent commentator of ancient Tamil Classics. He observes : *Illancet Cenni* of beautiful chariots, married the daughter of *Aluntur Val* and his son *Karikala* the great married the daughter of *Nankur Vel*."[28]

Ministers

There are some cases in which a vassal acted as a minister of his overlord. The chief of *Maiyur* acted as a minister is expressed in unmistakable terms as "Meiyur, Amaiceiyal Maiyurkilan"[29] i.e. the chief of Maiyur, who never swerves from the path of truth fulness, was the minister of the Chera King.

Checks to the Paramount Ruler

There were no cases recorded of a king making his minister or a favourite as a vassal or a chieftain as in the mediaeval period, the status of a minister often merged with that of a vassal and the provincial governor holding offices at the king's pleasure, tended to become feudatory chief in his own right.

The great chieftains were always very powerful and had their own administration and army. "Each chieftain claimed certain rights, privileges, and precedence and actually enjoyed them; and at least to the extent to which they were in the enjoyment of such rights, the absolutism of the kingwas under restraint.[30] *Nannan* of *Konkanam*, *Atiyaman* of *Takadur*, *Malaiyaman* of *Kovalur* and *Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan* were known for their good administra tion and powerful army.[31] The revolting vassal was one of the most dangerous threats to the security of the king. *Nannan*, *Atiyaman* and *Malaiyaman* were subdued several times by their over-lords in order to prevent them from revolting against their suzerainty.

Advantages

The polity of the *Sangam* period permitted the defeated kings to rule as feudatories, no doubt protected vested interest and favoured local autonomy. But it also introduced a permanent element of instability in the body politic. Naturally, the fendato-ries were always cherishing the hope of throwing the imperial yoke, as it found after the rule of great monarchs like *Karikala*, *Senguttuvan*, *Nedunceliyan*. Because of these recalcitrant chief-tains, the kings had to keep a vigilant watch, over their actions and intentions. They could not disarm their chieftains because, the kings needed their vassal's forces for their own purposes also.

From these observations, it will be clear that there was a loose form of feudal set up in the *Sangam* age which may be appropriately called quasi-feudalism, in which there were no written contract between the vassal and the King, but the parties were bound for their mutual fidelity, the one owing protection, the other service and there was no holding of the usufruct of land on the condition of rendering military service, the ultimate property was remaining with the lord, the grantor.

NOTES

1. A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp. 93–94.
2. Carl Stephenson, Mediaeval Feudalism, pp. 7–8.
3. *Tol. Porul.* 30, Nacc. Comm. *Ulutu Vunpor, Uluvittu Vunpor.*
4. *Patir.* 78 & Preface 8; Vide : M. Arokiaswamy, The Kongu Country, P. 67
5. *Akam.* 209
6. *Panintor teyam tamvali natappa Paniyarteyam Panittuttiraiyin Konmar"—Pattu.* 6:230.
7. *Tolaruvalar tolil Ketpa - Pattu* 9: 275.

   Prof. P. T. S. Iyengar's observation about this matter may be cited : "As *Ilantiraiyan* was a contemporary of *Karikala*, he must have been the appointed ruler of *Kanci*, after *Karikala*, conquest of that place and continued so after *Karikala's* death."—History of the Tamils, P. 397.

   Dr. M. Rajamanikkam is of the opinion that *Karikala* must have conquered *Tondaimandalam*, after the composition of *Perumpan Arruppadai"—Pattuppattu Araicci.*, P. 302.
8. "*Cholarkku tuppakiya Tervan Malaiyan"—Puram.* 125
9. Puram. 46; Indian Antiquary, Vol. 39; p. 256.
10. *Puram.* 174.
11. *Akam.* 246.
12. Ibid. 44.
13. Ibid. 125.
14. Cilap. Nir. 118-123.
15. *Akam.* 36.
16. Petit-Dutaillis, The Feudal Monarchy in France and England. pp. XIV–V.
17. *Puram.* 139.
18. Ibid. 179. *Patir.* 88.

19. *Puram.* 290.
20. Ibid. 299.
21. Ibid. 287, 297, 312.
22. Ibid: 312. In this poem, this author has taken into consideration the emendation, which is of different reading for *nannadai* as *Tannadai,* which he thinks is more appropriate and reasonable to the context of the picture-portrayal in the poem.
23. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, *Kavya Kalam,* p. 307;
24. *Pattu.* 6: 773-778.
25. *Patir.* 30.
26. Ibid. Sect. 9; Preface.
27. *Patir.* Sect. 2; Pref: Sect. 4; Pref: Sect. 5; Pref: Sect, 6; Pref: Sect. 8; Pref.
28. *Tol. Porul.* 30; Nacci. Comm.
29. *Patir.* Sect. 2, Preface.
30. T. V. Mahalingam, South Indian Polity, p. 18.
31. *Patir.* 40; *Akam.* 142, 208, 296.
    Akam. 115, 372; *Nar.* 381;
    Patir. Sect. 8. Preface,
    Puram. 87, 89;
    Tiruk. 198, 312,
    Nar. 170; *Akam.* 35, 209.
    Pattu. 4: 37, 54.

4

Classification of the Chieftains

As we have noticed earlier, a number of chieftains are mentioned by different poets who composed the poems of the *Sangam* anthologies. The chieftains seem to have been the vassals of one or the other ruler of the three Tamil kingdoms, or independent chiefs enjoying hegemony over small principalities. Their political life more often centred around a fortified towns.

Observations of the Historians

Dr. V. A. Smith's observations on the chieftains of ancient Tamilnadu require re-evaluation. He says that "in addition to the three principal kingdoms.........about a hundred and twenty more or less independent chieftains shared the government of the country and indulged in unceasing internecine wars"[1] He did not give any list of the chieftains. We cannot arrive at this number when we list and compute the chieftains found in the *Sangam* literature. No figure has been given by V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, the pioneer scholar, whose work 'The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago' still serves as an introduction to the history and culture of the Tamils.

In the 'Chronology of the Early Tamils,' the learned writer takes into consideration only the important chieftains, who are 66 in number and they have been distributed to the ten generations from the first century B. C. to the third century A. D.[2] with great care and consideration, the author has classified the chieftains and identified them with their namesakes in this study.

Significant Chieftains

A bird's eye view of *Sangam* literature, will give the impression that there were a large number of chieftaincies and that their number varied from time to time, owing to the historical exigencies. In the age of *Karikala,* there were eleven chieftains.[3] I believe that they were a powerful force, among the innumerable chieftains. In the pre-*Karikala* period, they were seven in number.[4] But in the post - *Karikala* period, they seem to have increased in number. They are refered to as *Irel Velir*[5] i.e. 14 in number, which probably included some of the minor chieftains also.

During the age of *Nedunceliyan,* the victor of *Talaiyalankanam,* there were five chieftains whose names are mentioned by *Nakkirar*[6]. Most probably, they were more famous among the chieftains of that time. This Pandiyan ruler defeated the two kings and the five chieftains. From this, we can presume that he had won a victory and thereby imposed his authority on the whole of Tamil land, the territory other than the Kingdom of the Pandiyas, divided among the two other kings and the five chieftains. On the whole, he had subdued seven[7] rulers.

In the same vein, the Chera kings, who established their suzerainty over other rulers of the Tamil land, claimed a sort of right to wear a garland of seven crowns.[8] This kind of reference is found peculiarly in a number of poems, celebrating Chera monarchs, who had the opportunity to wear the garland of seven crowns as pendents.

From this, it appears that there were only eight major territorial divisions of which, the three Tamil Kings and five distinguished chieftains were the rulers.

Re-Assessment

A survey of the sources will reveal, that there were about 97 chieftains and 16 tribal communities which can be classified into eight groups, collaborating all the pieces of information which are at our disposal.

1. Tribal Chieftains and Territorial Vassals

The first group includes the tribal chieftains and the territorial vassals. The tribal chieftains and the vassals of territorial tribes are not mentioned by their individual names. The tribal chieftains can be divided into two classes as: (1) tribal chieftains who are referred to by their tribal names and the vassals of some leading tribal families. *Eyinar, Oliyar, Kalavar, Kuravar, Kocar, Tiraiyar, Paratavar, Malavar, Vadukar* and *Velir* are the names of the tribal communities. *Atiyar, Aviyar* and *Oliyar* are the family names of some important vassals.

The next division consists of vassals who were called by their territorial names. They are *Aruvalar,*[9] *Kankar,*[10] *Konkar,*[11] *Puliyar,*[12] *Erumaiyuran*[13] and *Tondaiyar.*[14]

A word of caution, I wish to say that there are some chieftains who have found place in more than two or three classifications. They are known not merely as vassals, but also as *Kilan, Koman*, patron of arts and letters and generals. Though, they are mentioned in one or two places, their political history has been given under one group which is considered to be the most important or popular one, that may clearly reveal their greatness.

2. Barons or the Landed Aristocrats

Tracing the probable origin of the chieftains, we have noted that *Kilars* were the barons, who mainly depended upon the agricultural regions and very often they were the leaders of the agricultural communities of the particular village or town. The suffix *Kilan* or *Kilavan* denotes the leader of the agricultural tracts.[15] This was recognized as a title of the *Velir*. The suffix *Kilar* or *Kilan* means one in possession of rights, which occurs invariably affixed to the names of villages. They were the owners and guardians of the rights of the villages.[16] From the *Sangam* Classics, we are able to identify about 13 *Kilars* and one recipient of Brahmadeya, probably from the Chola King.

They were :

(a) *Ampar Kilan Aruvantai*
(b) *Inturkilan Toyan Maran*
(c) *Peruncattan,* son of *Ollaiyur Kilan*
(d) *Karumpanur Kilan*
(e) *Konkanam Kilan*
(f) *Cirukudi Kilan Pannan*
(g) *Nalai Kilan Nakan*
(h) *Nidur Kilavon*
(i) *Peruncattan,* son of *Pitavur Kilan*
(j) *Poraiyarrukkilan*
(k) *Mallikilan Kariyati*
(l) *Vallar Kuti Kilan*

and (m) *Kauniyan Vinnantayan,* the Brahmin baron of *Puncarrur,* the recipient of a Brahmadeya.[17]

From this list, we can infer that the names of these barons were not mentioned in general. But, the name was given specifically, wherever the father of the particular person was a baron or a noble.

3. Princes and Dukes

Some of the chieftains were the princes or the scions of the royal families.[18] They were:

(a) *Alici*
(b) *Attan* Atti
(c) *Sentan*
(d) *Cheraman Vanjan*
(e) *Titiyan*
(f) *Nalladi*
(g) *Pandiyan Kiran Cattan*
(h) *Nambi Nedunceliyan*

The other chieftains were known by their titles *Ko, Kon* and *Koman.* They were about eight in number:

(a) *Eraikon*
(b) *Kandirak Koperunalli*
(c) *Ilankkandirakko*

(d) *Viccikko*
(e) *Ilavlccikko*
(f) *Taman Tonrikko*
(g) *Cellikkoman Atan Elini*
(h) *Velavikkoman Patuman*[19]

These princes and dukes may be compared to the Dukes of Normandy and Burgundy who were lords of the Feudal monarchy in France.

4. The Velirs

The third important division of chieftains were well known as *Velir*. Many of them were popular feudal lords of ancient *Tamilakam*. In *Tolkappiyam*, it is clearly stated that *Vellalas* shall have no other duty except the 'duty of tilling the soil and earning the food thereby. They will have the right of carrying weapons and wearing garlands when they were employed by the kings in the affairs of the state.[20]

Peraciriyar, the commentator of *Tolkappiyam* gives some clue to the phrase when they are employed by the kings and says that it means the 'posts offered by the king such as the general of the army'[21] etc. So, it is probable that the *Velir* were not only the chieftains of agricultural regions but also appear to have officiated as the generals of army at the time of emergency. Hence, they would have also served as military chiefs of their kings.

All the four references found in *Patirruppattu*, the *Velirs* are mentioned along with the *Ventar* or the kings. e.g. "The king of the victorious trumpets and the *Velir* with one voice trembled with fear."[22] *Naccinarkiniyar* states that these *Velirs* were entitled to rule territories other than Tamilnadu as Kings, but not as Kings of *Tamilakam*.[23] From this statement, we can infer that there might have been a tradition among the Tamils, that the Monarchs of the three royal families alone were entitled to be the Kings of Tamilnadu. All other rulers of the Tamil land were denied this high sounding title of *Ventar*, however great they might be.

Vel means desire. *Vetkai* is a Tamil word meaning 'desire'. So, *Vel* may mean the 'beloved of the people'. Because of their munificence, the word *Velanmai* has come to mean 'helping or serving others'.[24] The word *Vel* means, the great God *Muruka*.[25] The poet *Mankudi Kilar* speaks of *Eliniyatan* as the *Vel* or *Muruka* of the victorious spear,[26] Lord *Muruka* is great as the 'warrior of warriors' and as one who grants to his devotees whatever they desire. In his *Velir Varalaru*, Prof. M. Raghava Aiyangar points out that Lord *Muruka* was the tutelary deity of some of the tribes of the *Yatu* race.[27] Can the name *Vel* and *Velir* be traced to this source? Without any detailed study, regarding the *Yatu* race, we cannot accept this hypothesis, which is based only on the similarity of the names.

There is another meaning of the word *Vel* as found in *Velvi*, the sacrificial fire. The cult of performing sacrifice seems to have captivated some of the kings of the *Sangam* age. "The sacrifices expected to give their authors what they yearned for and the name *Velvi* from the root *Vel* (to desire) came to be applied to them."

As soon as this cult gained currency, this meaning would have become popular, "the origin of the *Velir* also began to suggest the idea of a sacrificial fire."[28] Is it reasonable to connect the *Velir* with *Velvi* ?

One may cite *Kapilar's* poem from *Purananuru*[29] which traces the origin of the *Velir*, as an example. He expresses that *Velir* having arisen from the sacrificial pit (*Tada*) of the Northern Saint. Basing his argument, on this flimsy ground, Prof. M. Raghava Aiyangar makes an attempt to give a form and shape to the probable origin of *Velirs* to the Northern India.[30]

We must not take *Kapilar's* allusion to this legend as an historical fact. This allusion clearly gives a name and form to the vague memory of mythological background, supplied by the Aryan tradition to weild the tribes of different origins into one united Hindu race.

Most of the chieftains of this group, are known by their surname *Vel* which has been prefixed with their proper names. They are:

(1) *Vel Evvi* I
(2) *Vel Evvi* II
(3) *Vel Ay*
(4) *Vel Avi*
(5) *Vel Pari*
(6) *Vel Pekan* [31]
(7) *Vel-Eliniyatan* of *Vattarru* and
(8) *Neduvel Atan.*

Some of the *velirs* are called (9) *Veliyan Venman,* (10) *Nannan Venman* and (11) *Veerai Venman Veliyan Tittan.*[32] *Venman* is a derivative from the term *Velmakan,* like *Peruman* from the word *Perumakan.* So the prefixes *Vel* and *Venman* have similar significance.

There are a few instances in which, the surname *Vel* has been suffixed with the names of some chieftains e.g. (12) *Irunko Vel* (13) *Alumpil Vel.* [33]

Besides these *Velirs,* who are specifically mentioned, there are some references to them in general. Once 14 *Velirs* joined together and attacked the *Kaluvul* of *Kamur* which has been referred by *Paranar.* [34] The same poet gives a graphic description of the battle of *Venni Vayil* in which *Karikala* II fought against his enemies. In this battle, the two monarchs seem to have made a grand alliance with 11 *Velirs* with the intention of rooting out *Karikala* II.[35] But *Karikala* gave them a crushing defeat. The numerical compound '*eleven*' and 'fourteen' did not give any clue about the name and place of the *Velirs.*

It is interesting to note, that in *Pali,* a city in *Nannan's* territory, *Velirs* buried their precious ornaments and it was not possible for others to spot them. [36] It seems that there was a *Kunrur,* [37] very near the eastern sea-shore, [38] which was one of the abodes of *Velirs.*

5. Generals and Warriors

In the feudal monarchies, military chiefs and warriors occupied an important place. In the *Sangam* Age, as we have noticed earlier, there was a quasi-feudal society in ancient *Tamilakam*. There were many military chiefs. We are able to get some information about half-a-dozen generals and warriors. They owed personal loyalty to their monarchs and freely accepted links with them finding their remuneration as *Tannatai* or grants of land, which they held hereditarily.

Enati was an important honour bestowed generally on distinguished soldiers who were the chiefs of the army. In *Kalittokai*, there is a unique reference to this felicitation of confering the title which is called *Enatippadiyam* [39] when a king honours his distinguished warrior with the title *Enati*, he wears a gold ring studded with gems and the insignia of his office. [40] According to *Tolkappiyam*, *Marayam* was a title which was conferred by the kings on their distinguished soldiers with some other rewards when the king undertook an expedition. [41] In the inscriptions of the Mediaeval period, there are many references to the *Marayam* honour. The recipients of this honour, were known as *Marayan* and their wives were called *Marasi*.

From the colophons to *Purananuru* 167, 174, and 394, it appear that there were three persons who received the *Enati* title from their kings. *Enati Tiruk Killi*, *Malaiyaman Choliya Enati Tirukkannan* and *Choliya Enati Tirukkuttuvan* were the recipients of this title. *Enati Tirukkilli* was most probably a general of the Chola king. The other two generals, it is known clearly from their surnames *Choliya Enati*, were the generals of the Chola King. There were some other feudal chiefs without this title. They are known as *Vanavan Maravan Pittan*,[42] *Tennavan* Vaya *Maravan Nancil Valluvan*[43] and *Cholan Maravan Palaiyan*. [44] The term *Maravan* in general, means a ferocious warrior. But in this context, it denotes the army commander.

Besides these generals, there were about 10 warriors who distinguished themselves as great soldiers, in the battle fields. They were:

(1) *Aruman,* (2) *Aviyan*
(3) *Arukai,* (4) *Anni,*
(5) *Elini* (Kannan),
(6) *Kaluvul,* (7) *Tantu Maran*
(8) *Talumpan,* (9) *Palaiyan Maran* and
(10) *Viran.* [45]

These warriors and the generals seem to have played the role of the military chiefs, which is one of the important features of feudalism.

6. Minor Chieftains

On the borderland of the three Tamil kingdoms, there were a number of chieftains *who ruled over small* principalities. More often, they owed their allegiance to the adjacent kings, who were very powerful. Many of these chieftains were the chiefs of tribal communities. Their principalities were not very fertile. But, in some cases, they were the guardians of the fortresses and acted as lieutenants of the kings who were their overlords. They were :

(1) *Atanunkan*
(2) *Kadiya Neduvettuvan*
(3) *Mavan Tittan*
(4) *Veliman*
(5) *Venkai Marpan* [46]

These five chieftains may be called Minor Chieftains.

7. Petty Chieftains

In this group, those who are known only by their names for their heroic deeds and munificence are included. There are twenty names to be listed in this group. They were :

(1) *Atti*
(2) *Antuvan Keeran*
(3) *Antuvan Cattan*
(4) *Ay Eyinan*
(5) *Atan Alici*
(6) *Atan Avini*

(7) *Errai*
(8) *Katti*
(9) *Kadalan*
(10) *Kanalyan*
(11) *Kurumplyan*
(12) *Nalli Atan*
(13) *Panan*
(14) *Pindan*
(15) *Punthurai*
(16) *Periyan*
(17) *Mudiyan*
(18) *Muvan*
(19) *Vandan*
(20) *Vanan*
(21) *Villiyatan*[47]

8. The Great Chieftains

In this last group, the most historic personages, who were a powerful force in the political sphere and those who were ready to break their allegiance to their over-lords may be included.

Nannan-I, Tontaiman Ilantiraiyen. Nannan (the son of *Nannan)* or *Nannan-II, Pokuttu Elini, Kotaipporunan* and *Nalliyakkotan* are the important members of the great chieftains.[48]

We may discuss in detail the seven patrons of Arts and Letters who were called the *Katai yelu Vallals* in a separate chapter. The last, but not the least importance is the history of *Kuṇanan,* the great philanthropist who came into the political arena after the decline and downfall of the three kingdoms of ancient *Tamilakam.*

Geo-Physical Aspects

The chieftains of the *Sangam* Age, can also be classified in another form. They are : (1) The Independents, (2) The Minor Chieftains and (3) The Refractory.

In the first group, Feudatories who were masters of politically demacrated territories over which they exercised

sovereign sway can be included. Those who were in possession of definite areas of their own but enjoyed their hegemony only subordinating themselves often, if not always with the one or the other of the three royal dynasties of Tamilnadu or to a major and powerful Feudatories may be called as Minor Chieftains.

The third type of chieftains were those of commanders of the armed military units who have no well-marked nor ancestral realms of their own, who often shifted their allegiance from one to the other of the three monarchs or feudal lords or for other sentimental considerations.

Independent chiefs can be classified into *Velirs* and non-*Velirs*. As we have noticed earlier, the Velirs had marital relationship with the three traditional monarchies of Tamilnadu. The latter had no rights to marry the ladies of the royal families.

The chieftaincies of this period are very unique. We find them that they are existing side by side with the three domains of the crowned kings. So, they appear that they were not the products of the weakness of the royal families, but the results of the geo-physical conditions of the ancient Tamil country.

The Sangam Classics give us a fairly detailed picture of the life of the people during the period of the chieftains. Owing to lack of recorded evidence much information regarding the political life of the period is not now available but ample evidence for the reconstruction of the 'Cultural Life' of the age is available. The available 'historical sketches' reveal the heroic spirit of the age. In them, we find the extraordinary liberality of the chieftains to the poets and other artistes. The thirst for fame appears to be the motive behind the chieftain's exploits and munificence.

NOTES

1. Vincent A. Smith, Early History of India, P. 457
2. K. N. Sivaraja Pillai, *OP. Cit* PP. 73, 85; 105-106; 118, 125, 140, 150, 153-155; 157-158; 166
3. *Akam*. 246
4. Ibid 44
5. Ibid 135
6. Ibid 36; and *Pattu*. 6
7. Ibid 36
8. *Patir*. 14, 16, 40 and *Cilap*. 28:169
9. *Pattu*. 9:275
10. *Akam*. 44
11. *Kuru*. 163; *Nar*. 192; *Akam*. 79, 253, 368
12. *Kuru*. 163; *Nar*. 192; *Akam*. 6
13. *Akam*. 36, 115, 253
14. *Kuru*. 213, 269; *Pattu* 4:454
15. *Tivakaram* P. 41
16. M. A. Durai Rangaswamy, The Surnames of the Sangam Age, P. 151
17. *Puram*. 385, 180, 242, 381–384, 154, 173, 388, 179. *Akam*. 266; *Puram*. 395, 396, 391, 177, 178, 181, 166
18. *Tiru*. 258; *Niar* 87, 150; *Akam*. 222, 236, 376, 396;
    Tiruku. 258; *Niar*. 190
    Puram. 398; *Akam*. 36, 45, 126, 145, 196, 262, 331, 356
    Puram. 178
19. *Puram*. 157, 149, 150, 151, 198.
    Kuru. 219, *Pattu*. 8:21-26.
    Akam. 216; *Patir*. Sect. 8:Pref·
    Tiruk. 148

20. *Tol. Porul.* 636
21. Ibid, *Pera.* Com.
22. *Patir.* 30
23. *Pattu.* 9:274, Nacci. Com.
24. M. A. Dorai Rangaswamy, OP; Cit; P. 153
25. *Aink.* 250; *Patir.* 11.6; *Pari.* 18:26
26. *Akam.* 216
27. M. Raghava Aiyengar, Velir Varalaru, P.5
28. M. A. Dorai Rangaswamy, OP; Cit; P.155
29. *Puram.* 201
30. M. Raghava Aiyengar, OP; Cit; PP. 6-8
31. *Puram.* 233, 234
    Kuru. 129, *Akam.* 266, 366; *Pari.* 24; 202
    Puram. 129, 131, 240, 241, 374; *Tirruk.* 84
    Nar. 237, 167: *Akam.* 148, 181, 208, 396;
    Pattu. 3:99; *Akam.* 1, 161, 167
    Puram. 141, 147, 158
    Akam. 262
    Pattu. 3:105-120
    Puram. 141, 147, 158, 176, 200-202, 236, 237
    Kuru. 196; *Akam.* 78, 308; *Pattu.* 3:88-91
32. *Puram.* 208, 395; *Akam.* 36, 58, 97, 208
33. *Puram.* 201, 202, 283; *Pattu.* 6:345
34. *Akam.* 135
35. "*Patinen Velirodu*
    Ventar Caya" — *Akam.* 246
36. *Akam.* 135
37. *Nar.* 280
38. *Kuru.* 164
39. *Kali.* 81

    Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, in his gloss on the *Perunkathai's* reference to the term *Enati*, says that

the term implies the meaning of a commander of an army. Modern Linguists explain this term as a derivative of the Sanskrit word *Senadhipathi*. p. 164

40. *Pattu*. 6 : 719
41. *Tol. Porul*. 68
42. *Akam*. 143
43. *Puram*. 390
44. *Akam*. 326
45. *Kuru*. 293. *Nar*. 367; *Puram*. 383; *Akam*. 271; *Patir*. 44; *Nar*. 180; *Akam*. 45, 126, 145.
    Puram. 158, 230, 292
    Tiruk. 80,
    Akam. 135, 365
    Patir. sect. I. Pref.
    Aink. 58, *Nar*. 380
46. *Puram*. 195, 389
    Ibid 205
    Ibid 80, 352, 395
    Nar. 58
    Akam. 152, 226, *Nar*. 58.
    Puram. 21
47. *Akam*. 44, 148, 181
    Puram. 71, *Aink*. 1, *Akam*. 41, 226
    Tiruk. 11
    Akam. 81, 44, 262, 386, 152
    Ibid 113, 226
    Ibid 44, 100, *Nar*. 131, 180, 390.
    Puram. 209; *Nar* 18; *Pattu*. 9: 31;
    Akam. 117, 204, 269
    Nar. 340
    Pattu. 6: 203

5

Territorial Identification of the Chieftaincies

In ancient times, the hill of *Vankadam* was the recognised limit of the Tamil country in the north, and the West Coast was included in it as well as a good part of the country, which now forms part of the Karnataka State. Kerala was a part and parcel of ancient TamilNadu. *Tamilakam* according to *Tolkappiyam* was divided into the three Kingdoms, of the three kings of great renown.

1. Territorial Divisions

Besides these three normal divisions, another division came into existence in the northern part of the *Tamilakam*, which was known as *Tondainadu* or *Tondaimandalam*.[2] This territorial division was different from the other political divisions of *Tamilakam*.

"Though the works of the *Sangam* age refer to the *Kongu* country as a separate unit, it is clear that it was not considered as such in earlier epoch. The very name *Kongu* does not appear in earlier works like *Tolkappiyam*, where the author makes a classification of the different divisions (nadus) of the Peninsula. In the Chapter of *Sol*, *Sutra* 400, where the thirteen *nadus* or divisions of ancient *Tamilakam* are mentioned, *Kongu* does not find a place".[3] But in the *Sangam* Classics, there are many references to *Konkar* and *Konkarnadu*.[4]

The earliest reference to the five territorial divisions of Tamil nadu is by *Tirumular*. He speaks about the wisdom that has spread in the five *mandalas* of *Tamilakam*.[5]

In this reference, he has clearly stated that the land of the Tamils has been divided into five *mandalas*. *Tirumular's* age has been fixed between the third and sixth centuries A.D.[6] It may be probable, that at the fag-end of the *Sangam* Age, *Konku mandala* became a separate territorial division.

From *Tolkappiyam*, it seems that there was a persistent tradition about territorial divisions of *Tamilakam* on linguistic basis, *Tolkappiyar* says *Ticaiccol* or the dialectical variations of the Tamil words are those, which are spoken with their meaning unchanged in the twelve divisions of Tamil land, but with the exception of the region where the *Sentamil* or the standard forms of Tamil was in use."

"*Sentamil* sernta panniru nilam"[6] means "Tamil Nadu which is divided into thirteen parts, where chaste Tamil is spoken." All the commentators, except *Deivaccilaiyar* had given the meaning of this verse in a different way, thinking of their own days, in which the territories of other Dravidian languages had come into existence.[7]

Traditional Divisions

They say that the main Tamil Nadu itself was divided into twelve parts, in addition to the *Sentamilnadu* which was the heart of ancient Tamil country. The Sentamilnadu was believed to be the region that lay between the river *Vaikai* on the North, the river *Marutaru* on the South, *Karuvur* on the East, and *Maruvur* on the West. According to this view, the twelve linguistic divisions of *Tamilakam* were :

1. South *Pandi Nadu*, 2. *Kuda Nadu*, 3. *Kutta Nadu*, 4. *Karka Nadu*, 5. *Venadu*, 6. *Puli Nadu* 7. *Panri Nadu*, 8. *Aruya Nadu*, 9. *Aruva Vadatalai Nadu*, 10. *Ceeta Nadu*, 11. *Malai Nadu*, and 12. *Punal Nadu*[8]

We cannot easily identify these territorial divisions with the modern districts of Tamilnadu. In these 13 linguistic divisions, *Ten Pandi*, *Kutta Nadu* and *Kuda Nadu* can be clearly identified. *Ten Pandi Nadu* was the southern part of *Tamilakam* which was known as the *Pandiyan* country. *Kutta Nadu* and *Kuda Nadu* constituted the Chera country. *Kuda Nadu* was in the northern

part of the Chera country, which has been identified with the modern Coorg and *Kutta Nadu* was the southern part of Chera country, which is actually modern Travancore and Kocchi districts of Kerala. *Karka* (kal+ka) *Nadu*, i.e., the land of mountains and grooves can be identified with the help of early Kannada inscriptions as the south-western part of the Karnataka State. It was called as *Konkanam Nadu* in the *Sangam* Classics.[9] *Venadu* is generally believed to be the land ruled by *Vels* (Vel+Nadu) which was in the *Kanniya Kumari* district. It was the territory between *Kollam* and *Atankodu* and was on the borderlands of the Chera and *Pandiya* country in ancient times.[10] *Puli Nadu* is identified with the southern part of *Ponnani* Taluq in the Malabar district of Kerala.[11] These five linguistic divisions, viz. *Puli Nadu, Karka Nadu, Kuda Nadu, Kutta Nadu* and *Venadu* have formed part of the ancient Chera country.

According to some scholars, *Panri Nadu* is the hillocks region where some hillocks are known as . *Panri Malai* in the Dindugal region. Another view is that *Panri Nadu* is the northern part of *Konku* country.

The southern portion of the Nilgiris district and the northern part of the Coimbatore district constituted the Ceeta Nadu. It is known from the inscriptions that Malai Nadu was the western portion of *Tirukkovilur* Taluq. These three territorial divisions might have formed part of *Konku Nadu*.

Punal Nadu is believed to be the Chola country, which is known for its perennial rivers with full of water.

Then there are only two divisions which are known as *Aruva Nadu* and *Aruva Vadatalai Nadu* which are identified with the southern and northern parts of *Tondai Mandalam*. South Arcot, Chingleput and the southern portion of the North Arcot district, constituted *Aruva Nadu* and the northern part of Nortn Arcot, Chittoor and a piece of Nellore district upto Swarnamukhi river formed the *Aruva Vadatalai Nadu*.

Cenavaraiyar, the commentator of *Tolkappiyam*, instead of mentioning *Venadu* and *Punal Nadu* has included *Ponkar Nadu* and *Oli Nadu* in this list. *Ponkar Nadu* is usually identified with the Chola country which is the land of groovcs andwet lands. There

is difference of opinion among scholars in identifying *Oli Nadu* Some scholars interpret the term *Oli* as *Pukal* or fame and think that it may refer to the *Pandiyan* country whose rulers were famous among the three royal dynasties of *Tamilakam*.[13] But historians explains that the term *Oli* refers to *Nagas* and so it may be the land inhabited by the *Nagas*.[14]

Tradition confers the name Chola country on the area bounded on the north and south by the two small rivers by the same name *Vellar*, the northern *Vellar* entering the sea near *Parankipettai* and the south passing through the middle of the Pudukkottai district, to the west it was extended upto *Kottaikkarai*, the traces of the strong embankment of which still remain in the *Kulittali* Taluq of the *Tiruchi* district. The territory to the south of Chola kingdom upto Cape Comoirn was the Pandiya country. Chera country comprised North Travancore, Cochin, South Malabar and some fragments of Salem, Coimbatore and Coorg districts.

On the northern side of the Chola country, the territory from the *Pennar* in the South Arcot district to the *Suvarnamukhi* river in the Nellore district constituted the *Tondaimandalam*.

It has been said that the coast alregion and more open country belonged to the chieftains and perhaps to a few tribes.

Principalities of the Chieftains

We have noticed earlier that a large number of chieftains held different areas of the Tamil country. To spot the exact geographical position of the various chieftaincies is not possible. We must bear in mind, that we cannot point out the exact region of the all the chieftains who have been mentioned elsewhere. It is only possible to demarcate the boundaries of the major chieftaincies.

1. Nannan's Konkanam

One of the chieftains, who ruled the northern edge of the Chera territory is known as *Nannan* I. He was the ruler of *Punnadu*, otherwise it was called *Konkanam* which was famous for gold.[15] It was also called *Tulunadu*, where a large number of peacocks could be found in the groves.[16] From other literary

references, it appears that there was a stretch of land in between the Western shore and the mountains. The land-mass was lengthy with a small breadth of territory.

Prof. Saletore derives the name from the word 'Tulu' of Old Kannada which literally means "to attack" i.e. Warlike people[17]. The northern portion of the sea-shore region was called *Tulunadu* and south-western part of *Konkananadu* was known as *Pun-Nadu*[18] It is interesting to note the probable meaning of *Konkanam*. Prof. S.K. Aiyangar thinks that "the formation of the term *Konkanam* shows its Tamil character. It breaks into two *Kol* and *Kanam*. *Kol* means literally, 'taking forcibly', 'possession of that which is not one's own,' that is plunder. This is the way in which the word legitimately breaks up as indicated by the interposition of the (adjective) *Perum* between the two words in some of these *Sangam* poems,[19] the word interpolated meaning merely *great*. The whole expression would be the great forest region, where it is legitimately open to anybody to take what he can a sort of noman's land, legitimately open to occupation or appropriation by anybody that can do so".[20]

But we can explain the terms without making any strain as "the forest land which was brought into habitation". This country seems to have comprised the territory of *Tulu*, that is the country round Mangalore and the two districts of Kanaras, North and South. But how far further it was extended in the north wards, we can not say with certainty.

Veliyam, the important city ia *Punnadu* was the capital of this region, which was ruled by *Velir* Chieftains. Among them *Vliyam Venman* was a prominent one.[21]

There was a mountain in the southern part of *Tulunadu* which is known as *Elil* hills in the *Sangam* Classics.[22] This has been called by Portugese, Monte D'Ele and was the subject for a number of interpretations by scholars. Now, it is in the Malabar district of Kerala. This *Konkananadu* was famous for bamboos.[23]

We know that *Parasurama* was related to the legendary origin of Kerala. There is only one reference to as *Parasurama Maluval Nediyon* in *Sangam* in which it has been said that he

erected sacrificial pillar to commemorate the performance of *Velvi* in *Cellur* which was in the *Tulunadu*.[24]

There were four towns *Param*, *Pazhi*, *Kotukur* and Viyalur is now called Bailur. The important port for *Tulunadu* was *Naravu*. In order to difierentiate the name of this town from toddy, which is also called *Naravu* in Tamil, ancient Tamil poets used to address this port as non-consuming *Naravu*-Tuvva *Naravu*.[25]

The Classical writers have said that 'Damirike' i.e. the land of the Tamils started from the shores of *Naravu*, the portal town of *Tulunadu*.[26]

2. Kocar's Territory

The *Sangam* works mention a number of tribes among whom *Kocar* seems to be very popular. They were war-like people. Many victories have been attributed to them of which one over *Nannan* seems to be the first. It was after this event, that it was possible for them to settle down in the *Tulu* country. Some scholars think that they were the original inhabitants of Tulunadu. Then they extended their dominion to *Konku* region in due course. Modern scholars attribute the Indusvalley as the original home of the *Kocar* .

3. Erumaiyuran's Erumainadu

The first inhabitants of the *Konku* region were the *Kurumbar*, the popular pastoral race of *Panri nadu* which is the territory on the north of the *Konku* region and beyond that was the *Erumaiyur* or the region of the buffaloes, from which modern Mysore itself has taken its name.[26]

4. Konkar of Konkunadu

Among the early inhabitants of the *Konku* country were the *Konkar*, the tribe related in its name tothe country, thatit had occupied. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the *Konkar* had come from modern Coorg.[27] *Ilanko Adikal* refers to them in unmistakable terms as *Kutaku Konkar*[28] which literally mean that they had come from Coorg.

5. Atiyamans of Takadur

Atiyaman was the chief of the renowned warrior clan of *Malavar*. *Takadur* was his capital. *Takadur* is identified with modern *Dharmapuri*. The *Takadur* territory seems to have consisted of *Dharmapuri Taluq*. *Arur Taluq*, and southern parts of *Osur* and *Krishnagiri* taluqs of modern *Dharmapuri* district. South of *Dharmapuri*, there is a town called *Ataman Kottai* which reminds us even today of *Atiyaman Neduman Anci*, the illustrious ruler of *Takadur*. It was adjacent to *Erumai Nadu*.

6. Ori of Kollimalai

Ori was one of the seven patrons of *Sangam* age who ruled the *Kollimalai* region of modern *Salem* district. There were fourteen towns in the midst of *Kollimalai* region. In *Kollimalai*, there was a deity called *Kollippavai* which was an interesting theme for the Sangam poets. These two chieftains of *Malavar* clan had kinship with the Chera kings.

7. Pittan of Kutirai Malai

The mountain range which separates South Canara district from the Karnataka State was called *Kutirai Malai*. It was in the east of *Konkanam*. One of the peaks resembled the face of a horse. So it got the name *Kutirai Mukku*. Poets used to call it 'non-riding horse' *Urakkutirai*[29]. It is in the *Udumalaipettai* Taluq. That region was ruled by *Korran* family of the chieftains. *Pittan Korran* was the head of that chieftaincy. Now that town is called *Kottakanavar* by Konkanis. Among the chieftains, *Pittan* was a great soldier and a munificient ruler.[30]

8. Kumanan of Mutirai Malai

Mutirai Malai is one of the names of a peak, which is very near to *Kutira Malai*, formerly that was in *Udumalaipet* Taluq. The territory around the hill was known as *Mutiraimelai Nadu*. It comprised north-western portion of *Palani* Taluq and south-eastern part of *Udumalaipet* Taluq. The capital of that region was also known by that same name *Mutiram*.[31]

At the fag-end of the *Sangam* period, this region came into prominence, because of its famous ruler *Kumanan*.

9. Irunko Vel of Araiyam

Irunko Vel was one of the chiefs of the eighteen families of *Velirs* who settled in the *Tuvarai*, the headquarters of *Erumaiyur*, the northern part of modern Karnataka State. In the days of an evil ancestor of *Irunko Vel* there was a flourishing city called *Araiyam*,[32] which was the homeland of *Irunko Vel's* ancestors. That town consisted of two suburbs called *Peraraiyam* and *Cirraraiyam*. But the city was destroyed by a curse pronounced by *Kazhathalaiyar*, a poet in the days of an evil ancestor of *Irunko Vel*.

The location of this place in the Chola country is discredited by R. Raghava Iyengar. He locates it, in a mountainous region in the central, northern fringes of *Tamilakam*.[33] But, it has been known as one of the twenty-four nadus of *Konkunadu*, which seems to have been consisted the northern part of Periyar district and the western fringe of *Namakkal* region.[34]

10. Punrurai of Punturai

There was one *Velir* Chieftain by *Punrurai*.[35] He ruled from the *Poonturai Nadu*, one of the twentyfour divisions of *Konku* country, which is known as *Poonturai* of West bank. After this name of the chieftain, the city and the adjoining region has been called *Poonturai*, which might have been corrupted form of *Punrurai* as mentioned in *Akananuru*.[36] This *Poonturai Nadu* is identified with the southern part of Periyar district.

11. Toyan Maran

Fifteen miles from the western side of Erode, there is a village called *Inkur*, which has been identified with *Enthur* of Sangam age. The chief of that village was known as *Toyan Maran*. He was a baron as well as a great warrior.[37]

12. Viccikko of Viccimalai

In *Konku* country, on the north eastern side of *Kollimalai*, there are some hillocks called *Paccai Malai* today. The old name

for that hill was *Viccimalai*. In that region, there was a family of rulers. They were called Viccikko i.e., the Lord of *Vicci* hills. *Kurumpur* was the seat of this clan of chieftains.[38]

13. Tonrikko of Tonri hills

In the Karur Taluq of Trichy district, there is a hill known *Tantonri Malai*. It was known in the Sangam age as *Tonri Malai*. The feudal lord who ruled that region was *Taman Tonrikko*.[39]

14. Palaiyan of Mokur

In the Salem district, thirteen kms. from *Namakkal*, there is a town called *Mokanur*, on the southern banks of *Kaviri*. Scholars identify this town with *Mokur* of the *Sangam* period,[40] which was a fertile town with heavy rain and good yields. This was the home-town of *Palaiyan* who was defeated by *Senguttuvan*, the Chera King. The fortress at *Mokur* was destroyed by this King.[41]

15. Kattiyar of Kattinadu

On the northern banks of the *Bhavani* river, there are prosperous towns called *Satya Mankalam* and *Taramankalam*. With these towns as their headquarters, a family of chieftains who were known as *Kattiyar*, ruled the territory between the *Kaviri* on the east, and the Western Ghats on the west.[42] In the *Sangam* period, their principality seems to have extended upto the southern portion of the Karnataka State. Their territory was near the land of *Vadukar*, who spoke a different language as referred to in *Kuruntokai*.[43]

16. Pekan of Vaikavur Nadu

Palani and the region around that town was known *Vaikavur* or *Vaiyavur Nadu*. It was one of the twenty-four divisions of *Konku* country. The capital town of this region was *Potini*,[44] probably from which, the name *Palani* has been derived. The clan which ruled that region was known as *Vaiyaviar*. The founder of that family was known as *Avi*. It may be probable that the town *Vaiyavi* may denote a sub-group among the larger group of

Aviyar.[45] From that family, *Vaiyavikkopperum Pekan* rose to power as a great warrior and an eminent patron of arts and letters.

17. Kadiya Neduvettuvan of Kodai Malai

On the southern end of *Konku nadu* and on the north-western part of Pandiyan country, the *Palani* hills form a prominent place. One among the group of Palani hills on the southern end was called *Kodaimalai* in the *Sangam* period, in the modern period which is known to us as *Kodaikkanal*. On the northern slope of this mountain, there was a town called *Kadiyam.* With this town as his head-quarters, *Neduvettuvan* ruled the adjoining region.

18. Ay Chieftains of Venadu

Generally the land of *Vels* is known as *Venadu.* But K. V. Subramania Aiyer thinks otherwise. "*Venadu* is one of the twelve districts of low or vulgar Tamil according to Tamil grammarians. The *Keralorpatti* makes it one of the divisions of Kerala. It is derived from *Vel*, 'love or desire', either directly or through *Ven*. *Venadu* would mean therefore, "the land of love or the lovely land."

The Mr. Gopinatha Rao expressed the view that the term *Venadu* should be divided into *Vel* and *Nadu*, and that it means the country of *Vels*. He was of opinion that there was no justification for taking *Venman* as the ruler *Ven* (Trav. Arch. Series. Vol. I. P. 188).

After making this observation, K. V. Subramania Aiyer proceeds to put forward his own interpretation of that term. He says that, "though it is not improper to regard *Venadu* as a compound of *Vel* and *Nadu* and interprets it as the country of the *Vels*, yet the special application of the term *Venadu* to a particular country ruled by one of the several families of *Vels*-and not to others-would clearly indicate that the proper division of the compound *Venadu* is *Ven* and *Nadu*. If it is incorrect-and it is so—to call by the term *Venadu*, the country of *Konadu* of which *Kodumbalur* was the principal town, of *Miladu*, of which Tirukkoilur was the

capital, Parambu of *Prambu Nadu* and several others which were ruled by *Velir* chiefs, its separation into *Vel* and *nadu* are opened to serious objection. In this connection, it is also, worthy of consideration that the Tamil grammars call the country by the mere name *Ven*."[46]

It is true that the grammarians refer to that region as *Ven*, but it does not mean a 'land of lovely region' as Mr. Aiyer has interpreted *Ven* has no such meaning in Tamil. It may mean that the land of bamboos[47] which may be an appropriate one.

This *Venadu* was on the western sea-shore lying between *Kottaru* and *Atankodu* or modern Nagercoil. This was the homeland of the *Ay* chiefs. "Ptolemy speaks of the country of the *Ayioi* (Ayis), where he locates the commercial towns of *Melkunda, Elangkon,* a mart, *Kottiara*, the metropolis, *Bommala* and *Komaria,* a cape and town. *Melkunda* is apparently the same as *Nelkunda* of the Periplus and *Neacyndi* of Pliny; it may be identified with *Nirukundram*. The attempts to identify *Elankon* and *Bommala* with modern. *Vilavankodu* and *Ponnanani* respectively are hardly convincing. *Kottiara* is doubtless the modern *Kottar*."[48]

In this connection, Dr. K. K. Pillay's remarks on the accounts of Classical writers on *Ay* principality throw some new light. He says that "the reference to *Ays* by Ptolemy is interesting, particulary because of the Periplus has not a word to speak of them. It is not too much to suggest, therefore, that *Ays* were a small local tribe near around the *Podiyil* hills till about the first century A. D., and that they had subsequently moved west and north beyond *Kollam* reaching *Aykkudi*, near modern *Sencottah*."[49]

The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea was compiled sometime between 81 and 96 A. D., Ptolemy's geography was compiled about 140 A. D.[50]. These authorities indirectly provide ample testimony to fix the probable age of the *Sangam* period.

19. Valluvan of Nancilnadu

The region between *Atankodu* and south-*Kottaru* was known as *Nancilnadu*. Dr. K. K. Pillay clearly states that

"the tract bounded on the north by the *Kadukkarai* hills, on the south by *Manarkudy* lake, on the east by the *Aralvoymozhi* pass and on the west by the *Panrivaykkal*. These formed the orginal extent between *Nancilnadu* is learnt from the 'Mudaliyar Manuscripts', as well as from early inscriptions."[51]

Valluvan of *Nancil* seems to have ruled from *Valliyur*, which was situated on the highway from Tirunelveli to Nagercoil, near *Aralvay* pass.

20. Venkai Marpan of Kanappereyil

Kanappereyil is now called *Kalaiyar Koil* in the Ramnad district. The name of the fort reveals that it was in the midst of forest and the fort was not easily accessible to the enemies of *Venkai Marpan*. He was a feudatory of *Pandiyan* King.[52]

21. Evvi I and Parampu nadu

Evvi I, was a chieftain in the Pandiyan kingdom. He was the feudal lord of *Milalaik kurram*[53] in Pudukkottai district. It comprised the southern part of *Arantanki* taluq and eastern portion of Pudukkottai district. He had *Nidur* as his headquarters.

From this family, *Pari*, the greatest philanthropist of ancient *Tamilakam* came into prominence in the next generation. His territory was known as *Parampu Nadu*, which was around the *Parampu* hill. The *Parampu Nadu* consisted of 300 Villages. The *Parampu* hill is now called *Piran Malai*, in the southern part of Padukkottai district. About ten miles from *Madurai* on north—eastern direction, there is one Vaishnava town called *Tirumohur*. An inscription in that village says that the town is situated in the south *Parampu Nadu*.[54] *Paramakudi*, a town in Paramakkudi Taluq has been identified with Paramakkudi. If it is acceptable, we can say that the southern end of *Parampu* extended upto *Paramakkudi* *Parampu Nadu* of the *Sangam* period comprised the eastern portions of *Melur* taluq in *Madurai* district and the towns Tirupathur, Sivaganga and Paramakkudi Taluq of Ramanathapuram and Kattabomman districts.

22. Paratavar of South Eastern Region

The *Paratavar,* most probably the chiefs of fishermen (*Minavar*), ruled the sea-coast from Tuticorin to the Cape Comorin.[55] They were know as the chieftains in the southern most region of Pandiya Nadu.[56]

23. Nalli of Kandirakko

One of the seven patrons of arts and letters of ancient Tamil Nadu, was known as *Nalli.* He was the feudal lord of *Kandiram.* In that region, there was a hillock called *Totti Malai.*[57] From the inscriptions of tenth and eleventh centuries, we are able to identify the town *Kandiram* with the *Valikandapuram,* a town, south west of Viruddhachalam in South Arcot district.[58] The territory has been referred to as hilly region[59] and *Nalli* has been called the lord of the hilly region.

24. Kari of Malainadu

The hilly regions of modern *Tirukkoilur* was known in the *Sangam* period as *Malainadu,* i. e., the hilly country. The rulers of that region were known as *Malaiyamans.* As we have noticed earlier, the term *Peruman* has been derived from *Perumakan,* the title *Malaiyaman* has been the corrupted form of the word *Malaiyar Makan. Kovalur* was the headquarters of the *Malaiyamans.*[60] It is on the southern banks of *Pennai* river. *Mullur* was the most important town in that country.[61] Now it is in the *Cenji* Taluq. *Mullur* mountain was a steep one. Adjacent to that, there was a dense forest.[62] There was another town on the banks of *Pennai* and it was called *Kotunkal.*[63]

25. Nannan of Cengam

Cavvatu hills forms the western boundary of the North Arcot district. This hill was known as *Navira Malai* and now it is called *Pawala Malai.*[64] In earlier times, Ceyaru, the river seems to have flown from the hills. Now it is known as *Ceyyaru.* At the foot of that mountain, there is a town called *Cengam.* It was called

Cenkanma in the Sangam period.[65] The ruler of that region was called*Cengan Mattuvel*, i.e. the great *Vel* of *Cenkam*, the town is on the western side of *Tiruvannamalai*. It is on the southern side of the hills and on the southern banks of *Ceyyaru*.

26. Nalliyakkodan of Kidankil

In the southern stretch of *Tondainadu*, there was a territory called *Oyma Nadu*, which has been identified with the *Tindivanam* Taluq of South Arcot district. The capital of this feudal state was known as *Kidankil*. From the inscriptions found in the Siva temple at *Tindivanam*, which mention that this temple is in *Oymanattu*......Kidankil. The temple is situated very near to the bus-stand in *Tindivanam*.

There were four important cities in that region. They were (1) *Eyir Pattinam*, (2) *Velur*, (3) *Amur*, and (4) *Mavilankai*. The poet, who composed a laudatory poem on *Nalliyakkodan*, the chieftain of this territory has given a graphic account of these town.

(a) Eyir Pattinam

It was a portal town in *Oyma Nadu*. Classical writers, Ptolemy and the author of the Periplus have referred to this port as *Sopatna*[66]. Prof. Nilakanta Sastri has identified this port with modern *Marakkanam*.[67] But, an inscription found at the Siva temple, very near to *Marakkanam* states that the town was known as *Manakkanam*.[68] *Manakkanam* may be a corrupted form of *Manarkanam*.

One of the inscriptions of *Kulottunga* I, inscribed in his 35th regnal year, refers to one *Eyirpattinam*. It says that *Eyirpattinam* was a brahmadeya in the *Pattinanadu* of *Oyma Nadu*[69]. It was also called *Vikrama Chola Caturveti Mankallam* during the reign of *Kulottunga* II. From these epigraphical evidence, it appears that *Eyirpattinam* is different from *Manarkanam*. Now, we cannot identify this port with any existing towns. We have to presume that most probably this portal town would have submerged into the sea.[70]

(b) Velur

The *Velur*, which is mentioned in *Sirupan Arruppadai*, is a village on the south-western direction from Marakkanam Now it is called *Uppu Velur* There are three temples in this village, each of them represents *Siva*, *Vishnu* and *Arukadeva*. From an inscription of the *Rajendra* I, found at the Siva temple, it appears that this *Velur* was known as *Maninattu Velur*.[71]

(c) Amur

The poet has mentioned that this town was situated on the route from Velur to *Kidankil*. There is hardly any town of that name to be found in the *Tindivanam* Taluq at present But there are some towns in the north-western side of *Velur* by name *Kondamur*, *Cirramur* and *Nallamur* *Nallamur* is only six miles from *Kidankil*. *Dr. M. Rajamanikkam* identifies this town with the *Amur* of the Sangam period.[72]

(d) Mavilankai

Mavilankai was a town with well fortified fortress is known from *Purananuru*,[73] From the description of *Naltattanar*, it seems that the town was a flourishing city in the river valley region. Now that town had become two hamlets, called *Mel-Mavilankai* and *Kizth Mavilankai*, which are only seven miles from *Tindivanam*, on the northern side. There are some mounds around this area, the excavation of which may throw some new light on this ancient city.

27. Tondaimans of Tondai Nadu

The origin of this name *Tondainadu* is shrouded in mystery. *Tondai* is a thorny creeper. The place where *Mullai* (Arabian jasmine) creeper was in abundance was called *Mullai Vayil* and the country where buffaloes-*Erumai*-were famous was known as *Erumaiyur*-similary, the region where *Tondaik-kodi* was in a flourishing condition, might have been called *Tondainadu*.[74]

Tondainadu was the land of dense forests. From olden days. it consists of several forests such as *Arcot* (forest of

Bauhinia Variegata) *Alankadu* (forest of banyan trees). *Velkadu*. (forest of babul trees), *Panankkadu* (forest of plamyras) and *Karaikkadu* (forest of a sping plant). After the destruction of these forests, the regions of these forests seem to have retained their names Perhaps, the thorny creeper *Tondal* might have been in a flourishing condition in this region.

Urutirank Kannanar, who has given a vivid account of the chieftain of *Tondaiyar* clan, does not mention the word Tondai nadu in his poem, *Perumpanarrupadai*. Even in *Pattinappalai*, he does not mention that name. But, he makes references to *Aruvalar*, who were the suzeratin power in this region. Ptolemy makes note of this country and its people as *Arvarnoi* [75] It means that they were the people of *Aruva Nadu*. *Ptolemy's geography* appears to have been compiled about 150 A D

Aruvanadu varied in its limits. *Mayilainatar*, the commentator of *Nannul*, identified *Aruvanadu* (his reading is Aruval-nadu) with the major portion of South Arcot district, north of the *Kolladam*. The same authority locates *Aruva Vadatalai* nadu in the *Chinglepet* district.

Prof P.T. Srinivasa Aiyangar says, that *Aruvalar* ruled the land lying between Chola country and the *Aruva Vadatalai* nadu which has been identified with the modern Chinglepet district.[76]

Dr. M. Rajamanikkam, on the basis of epigraphical evidence, has stated that *Chidambaram Kadaiur Viruddasalam* Taluqs and the southern portion of *Villuppuram* constituted the Aruva nadu. He refers to an inscription in *Tiruvamattur* temple, which clearly states that "the village was *Aruvanattu Tiruvamattur*".[77]

From the above observation, it seems that the *Tondainadu* was ruled by some tribes who belonged to the same race, who were generally known as *Tondaiyar*.[78] The term *Tondiayar* is mentioned in some verses. The term is in plural form and therefore, it may be interpreted as signifying a tribe or clan.

Tondaiyar were also known by the name *Tiraiyar*.[79] This family ruled the territory from *Kanchi*. According to the *Tondaimandalacatakam*, *Tondaimandalam* was bounded on the north

by *Tiruvenkadam* and *Kalahasti* mountains on the south by the river *Palar*; and on the west by the Chast.[80] A verse attributed to the Poetess *Auvaiyar* describes *Tondai nandalam* as the country bounded by the *Pavalamalai*, i e. the ***Eastern Ghats*** in the West; *Venkadam* i e. *Tirupati* in the north : the Sea to the east ; and *Pinakai* i e. the Southern *Pennaru* in the south[81].

Modern historians write that "the country was bounded by the *Suvarnamukhi* (in the Nellore District) in the north the, river *Pennar* in the south Arcot district in the south, the range of Eastern Ghats in the west and the *Bay of Bengal* in the east. It included the modern district of ***Chinglepet*** the city of Madras and parts of the districts, of *Chittore, North Arcot* and *South Arcot*[82].

Tondainadu was divided into twentyfour administrative units which were called *Kottams* and *Nadus.* This number seems to have varied in different periods.

The capital of the *Tondaiman Ilentiraiyan* was called *Kacci*[83] the modern *Kanchipuram.* *Pavattri*[84] was the seat of another ruler of *Tiraiyan* clan. It was on the sea-shore. It has been identified as *Kakanti* of later period, which was on the suburbs of *Reddippaalam* in the Gudur taluq in the *Nellore* district [85] The name of the town appears to be a corrupted form of the *Prokrit* word *Pavvattri*. There is also a specific reference to *Venkada* hills which was in the territory of one *Tiraiyan*, who was famous for his victorious spear.[86]

In view of these facts, we can assume that there were two chieftaincies in *Tondainadu*, ruled by the two branches of Tiraiyar Family. One was the northern province ruled by a *Tiraiyan* with *Pavatti* as his headquarters. The hills of *Venkadam*, most probably was the southern boundary of his territory.

Another *Tiraiyan,* traditionally called *Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan* ruled the southern part of *Tondainadu* with *Kacci*, as his Capital.[87]

28. Pulli of Venkatam

The north-eastern frontier of ancient *Tamilakam* was held by *Pulli of Kalvar clan.* He was the lord of *Venkadam*[38] or *Tiruppati* hills. It was the extreme North-eastern limit of the Tamil country, for it is stated that beyond this mountain there was the land of the *Vadukar,* who spoke a different language.[39]

This brief survey of the significant chieftaincies of ancient *Tamilakam* will reveal that there were a large number of territorial or administrative units which waried in size in consonance with the geographical conditions and the *demands* of the political manoeuvre.

By and large, there were chiefs of some in the desert land. They were known as *Eyinar* and *Vettuvar* lords of mountainous regions, barons of agricultural tracts; generals and warriors were incharge of considerable administrative units; princes and scions of royal families were hereditary, land lords of some villages and lastly the *Velirs* and nobles who ruled both the fertile and barren regions of ancient *Tamilakam.*

These chieftaincies, depended on one kingdom or the three royal dynasties. Because of this fact, the *masterminds* of the *Sangam* age like *Mamulanar* used to describe *Tamilnadu,* simply as the land of the three Tamil Kings. This has become a 'hoary tradition' but in actual practice, there were a number of chieftaincies, some of them most powerful and independent. Ambitious monarchs who were anxious to build a mighty empire, were often were confronted with the problem of consolidating the chieftaincies into a net-work.

NOTES

1. *Tol. Porul.* 391
2. *Akam.* 213; *Kuru.* 260
3. M. Arokiaswamy, the Kongu Country, P. 3.
4. "*Vadap puvin Konkar otti*"—*Akam*, 253.
   "*Aakelu Konkar Nadakap Padutta*"—*Patir* 22.
   Refer also: *Puram.* 173; *Cilap.* 12:47-8; 25;153-54; 30: 159-60
5. *Tiruman*, 1646.
6. M. Rajamanikkam, The Development of saivism in South India, p. 53.
7. *Tol. Col.* 400
8. *Nannul*, 273: *Sankara Namacclvars* Com; p. 255.
9. *Akam.* 154-156
10. K. V. Subramaniya Aiyer objects to call this ***Velnadu***, put he asserts that it is ***Vennadu***, i e; 'the land of love or the lovely land; Vide his ***Hostorical sketches*** of Ancient ***Dekkan.*** Vol. 3; P. 132.
11. Malabar Manual, Vol. I; PP. 647, 666.
12. M. Arokiaswamy, op. cit: p. 3.
13. K. D. Thirunavukkarasu, *Tamilar Nakarika Varalaru*, P. 137.
14. T. V. Mahalingam, *Kancipuram* in the Early south Indian Hiitory. p. 14.
15. *Nar.* 391.
16. *Akam.* 15.
17. B. A. Saletore, Ancient Karnataka, Vol. 1., History of Tuluva, P. 4.
18. *Akam.* 396
19. *Konperunkanattukkilavan*—*Puram*, 155
20. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Ancient India: South Indian History & Culture, P. 871.

21. *Akam.* 148. 181
22. *"Ezil Neduvaraip Pazhic Cilambu"*—*Akam.* 152, *Akam.* 392
23. Ibid, 230
24 *Puram*—*Akam.* 152; *Nar.* 265 *Pazhi*—*Akam.* 142, 152, 376 *Kodukur*—*Patir,* Sect 5; Preface, *Viyalur-Akam* 97; *Patir.* Sect. 5; Preface.
25 V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, The Tamils 1800 years Ago. PP. 17-18.
26 *Mahisha Mandela* (Mysore) is the Sanskrietised from *Erumaiyur.*
27. *Akam.* 79, 253, 368
28. *Cilap.* 30 : 159
29. *Puram* 168
30. Ibid; 168, 172
31. Ibid; 160
32. Ibid; 202
33. R. Raghava Aiyengar, *Kocar*, P.
34. *Kazhanthai*, *Kongu Nadu*, P. 53.
35. *AKam.* 44
36. A S Duraiswami Pillai, *Chera Mannar Varalaru.* P.137
37. *Puram.* 180
38. Ibid; 200 & *Kuru.* 328
39. Ibid; 399
40. *Kuzhanthai*, op. cit; P. 159.
41. Patir. 44, 42 & *Cilap.* 26 : 124-5
42. *Kuzhanthai*, op, cit; P. 162
43. *Kuru.* 11
44. *Akam.* 61
45. M. A. Durai Rangaswamy, op. cit; P. 136.
46. K. V. Subramaniya Aiyar, op. cit; Vol. 3: P. 132.

47. *Pingala Nikantu*, 4105
48. *K. K. Pillai*, A Social History of the Tamils. P. 269.
49. Ibid
50. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Foreign Notices of South India P. 5.9
51. K. K. Pillai, The Early History, *Nancinad*, P. 6.
52. *Puram*. 21
53. Ibid. 24
54. A R.E. 63 of 1905
55. M. Rajamanikkam, *Pattup Pattu Aaraicci* P. 358.
56. *Pattu*. 6 : 144 ; *Puram*. 378
57. *Puram*. 150
58. A. R. E. 12 of 1913
59. *Puram*. 150
60. Ibid. 69
61. *Nar*. 170
62. *Kuru*. 132
63. *Akam*. 35
64. S. I. I. Vol. 7 ; No. 118.
65. *Pattu*. 10 : 467
66. K. A. Nilakanta Sastry, op. cit ; P. 59.
67. Ibid : *Colas*, P. 22.
68. A. R. E 23, 26 of 1919
69. Ibid ; 30 of 1919
70. M. Rajamanikkam, op. cit ; P. 158.
71. Ibid ; P. 160
72. Ibid ; P. 161
73. *Puram*. 379
74. M. Rajamanikkam, op. cit ; P. 293.
75. V. Kanakasabhai, op. cit., P. 22.

76. P. T. Srinivasa Aiyengar, The History of the Tamils, P. 145.

77. M. Rajamanikkam, op. cit., P. 245.

78. *Kuru*, 260: *Akam*. 213; *Pattu*. 4:454.

79. *Pattu*. 4:37; *Akam*. 85, 340

80. *Tontaimandala Catakam*, ADDL. V.6.

81. *Peruntokai*, 2102

82. T. V. Mahalingam, op. cit; P. 23.

83. *Pattu*. 4:420

84. *Akam*. 340

85. Nellor Inscriptions, Vol. 1

86. *Akam*. 85 No. 86 & 87.

87. *Puram*. 185

88. *Akam*. 61, 83, 209; *Puram*. 385

89. Ibid : 295

90. "*Tamilkelu muvar kakkum Molipeyar teyattu Irantha*"— *Akam*. 31.

6

The Relative Chronology of the Chieftains

The Problem of Chronology

There is a proverbial statement that "If Chronology is the eye of history ancient Indian History should have to be always blind." This observation implies the intricate problems that are involved in fixing the dates of Kings and events in the history of country.

We are very much confronted with this major problem in this study of the chieftains of the *Sangam* Age. It is not possible to arrange the chieftains in the chronological order. But, I hope that we can make an attempt to find out the missing links which may connect some major chieftains with the great kings of their generation.

The edicts of Ashoka bear sample testimony to the existence of the three royal dynastics viz, the Chera, Chola, and Pandiyan, dynasties, Besides this the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga throws some new light about these dynasties. [1]

Asoka, the Mauryan emperor was anterior to the ruler of Kalinga. It has been fixed the regnal years of Asoka, as B.C. 272--232.[2] From the edicts of Asoka, it is crystal clear that the three Royal dynasties of Tamilnadu were in flourishing conditions. So, there is no doubt that the three royal families of *Tamilakam* would have originated even before the days of Asoka. On the basis of this First lithic evidence we can assert that the monarcs of Tamilnadu were in existence in the beginning of the third century B. C.

But, it is not possible for us to identify the rulers of Tamilnadu in the reign of Asoka. So, we can tentatively fix the upper

limit of the *Sangam* Age, the earliest period in the history of Tamilnadu as the third century B. C.

Karikala I seems to be the earliest ruler among the ancient Kings of Tamilnadu. He has been celebrated by his contemporary poets *Vennikkuyathiyar*[3], *Karungkuzhalatanar*[4] and *Kudavayil Keeratanar*[5]. Besides these three poets, *Paranar*[6], the poet of the later period have also composed some verses in eulogising this monarch. A verse composed by the poet *Kazhattalaiyar*[7] expresses that *Karikala* I and Chera King *Perunceralatan* were contemporaries. *Kapilar*, the illustrious poet of the *Sangam* Age refers to *Kazhattalaiyar* as a bard who lived several decades ago.[8]

Scholars are of the opinion that the *Perunceralatan* the patrion or *Kazhattalaiyar* might have been the hero of the first section of *Patirruppattu*, which has been lost in the limbo of oblivion. If we take this hypothesis into our codsideration, then we have to accept that *Imayavarampan*, *Nedunceralatan*, the king celebrated in the second Section of *Patirruppattu*.

It has been said that *Sengnttuvan* (*Kadal Pirakkottiya Kuttuvan*) was the son of *Imayawarampan*[9]. From this genealogical relationship, he had lived two generations after *Karikala* I.

We can notice *Porunarruppadai*, *Pattinappalai* and in one of the poems of *Paranar*,[10] the mighty chola king *Tiruma valavan* has been celebrated. This *Tirumavalavan* who has been identified as the grandson of *Karikala* I and so, he has been called Karikala I, by some of the historians of Tamilnadu[11].

In the regin of this great monarch, *Kaviripumpattinam* attained its supremacy as a great emporium of trade in the coromandel coast and was called *Pukar* by the native elites.[12]

Periplus is the first foreign(classical) source that records the importance and grandeur of *Pukar*, as an important port in the eastern seas [13] This work was composed somewhere in the middle of the (A.D 50-80) first century of the Christian era.[14]

Professor K. A Nilakanta Sastri has made some useful observations about the references found in this Periplus. 'A sea-

shore town near the gulf' has been distinguished from the internal capital of the Cholas. The interior headquarters of the Cholas has been pointed out as *Agaru*. This term should have been a corrupted form of the name of *Uraiyur*, the capital of the Cholas. The author of the Periplus used to call the region by the popular name of the town that is well known to the common folk[15].

So, it is more plausible and probable that the portal town was founded by *Tirumavalavan* He appears to have ruled in the fag-end of the first and the beginning of the second century A.D. On the basis of these evidence, we can assign the period between A.D. 81 to 105 as the probable regnal years of *Karikala* II, which may be more appropriate one. If we assign 25 years for a generation and calculate the reign of the kings of Tamilnadu on this basis, then the region of *Ilancetcenni*, the father of *Tirumavalavan* (Karikala II) will fall between A D. 56-80. If we calculate the regnal years on the basis of this sheet anchor of the chronology of the ancient Tamils, then the epoch of *Karikala* I, the father of *Ilancetcenni*, would have been the period between A.D. 30 to A.D. 55. On the basis, if we proceed to calculate the date of *Senguttuvan*, who ruled the Chera kingdom, two generations after Karikala I then it will appear as follows :[9]

Peruncheralatan was the grandfather senguttuvan and was a contemporary of *Karikala* I as we have observed earlier He can be assigned C.A.D. 20 to 45 on the basis of the preface to *Patirrupoattu* The same authority assigns 58years as the reigning period of his son *ImayavarampanNeduneheralatan*. On this basis, we can assign A D. 46 103 as the probable period of his reign. As we have noticed earlier, *Kadal, Pirakkottia Senguttuvan*, was the illustrious son of *Imayavaramban* The preface to the fifth section of patirruppattu records that Senguttuvan ruled for 55 years So, in the light of the above facts, the period between A D. 104 AD. 159 appears to be the regin of *Senguttuvan* This chronological calculation of *Senguttuvan's* reign coincides with the epoch of Gajabahu I alias Gamani Abhaya, the king of Sri Lanka who witnessed the consecration of *Kannaki* temple as the Chera's capital by the Chera's king *Senguttuvan*. Modern researches have established A.D. 111-136 as the probable period Gajabahu's of reign[16].

On the basis of this tentative chronological study, let us make a strenuous effort to fix the probable period of the ten generations of the chieftains of the Sangam Age.

Generation I

Chieftains of the Pre-Karikala I' Period

In the pre-Karikalan I period, *Alici* (Azhici) of *Arkkadi Centan* and *Tittan* I shine supreme. The poets who lived in the same period were *Sattanthaiyar*, and *Nakkannaiyar*[17], who have paid glorious tributes to these chieftains in their poems. From the verses of the poet of the subsequent periods, we are inclined to think that these chieftains might have lived in the early decades of the christian era. From the available sources one could not push the age of these chieftains to the early centuries before Christ.

Generation II

Chieftains of the Age of Karikala I (A.D. 30-55)

The battle of *Vennil* was the earliest encounter of *Karikala*, the great. This battle resulted in the establishment of Karikala's supremacy in Tamilnadu. He made a successful attempt to subdue the chieftains of that period and eradicated a number of fragmentary states and brought them under his sway.

In order of nipple the rising power the Cholas. Chera king led an expedition against this young Chola prince. He besieged the town of *Aluntur* of *Karikala* I. Both the combatants met at *Vennil*.

The spear of Karikala, pierced into the breast of *Perun Cheralatan* and wounded the backside. This wound induced in him a sense of shame, so, he gave up his life by observing a fast for many days which was popularly known as *Vedakkiruttal*, or a penance of looking Northward without eating and drinking anything until the last moment.

Karikala I was known by a surname *Perumpun Cenni* viz. Lord of the Cholas who have adorned with significant ornament.[18] At *Kalumalam*, this *Cenni* had to fight against a number of chieftains. They were (a) *Nannan* I, (b) *Errai*. (c) *Atti*,

(d) kankan, (e) Katti I, *and (f) Punrurai.* In that war *Palaiyan* I, the Chief of the Chola army laid his life. *Kanaiyan*, the c-in-c of the Chera king was taken as a prisoner[19] by *Karikala* I

Kirattanar of *Kudavayil* (a town near Kumbakonam) has decribed in a verse the battle of *Kalumalam*. But he also refers *Evvi (Evvi* I), another chieftain of that period, as his contemporary[20]. The same poet has celebrated *Peruncattan*, the son of *Olaiyurkilan* in another verse[21].

It is interesting to note that *Karikala* I fought against a chieftains in another battle at *Vakaipparantalai*[22] and rooted out their alliance.

But, we could not know the names of these chieftains. They might have been great warriors who contracted an alliance with each other and wanted to curb the rising power of the Cholas.

Generation III

Chieftains of the Epoch of Ilancetcenni (A.D.56-80)

As we have noticed earlier, *Ilancetcenni* was the father of *Tirumavalavan* (Karikala II). He has been praised as *Ilancetcenni* with innumerable fascinating chariots.[23] 'which tells that he was an indomitable and invincible king, whose strength was mainly the troops of chariots, he had.

He besieged the fortress of *Ceruppali*, and destroyed it with great process[24].

In the days of *Ilancetcenni*, the tribal chieftains such as (a) *Vicciyar* (b) *Aviyar*, (c) *Konkar*, (d) *Puliyar* and (e) *Velir* made unsuccessful attempts to establish their independence. Besides these tribal chieftains, Nannan I,[25]. *Atikan* I[26] and *Palaiyan* II[27] had played an important role in the political sphere.

Generation IV

Chieftains in the Age of Karikala II (A. D. 81-105)

He is known as *Karikal Peruvalattan* and *Tiruvalavan*. The suffics in these names imply that' one who has made his realm affluent or flourishing.

When Karikala II ascended the throne, the Chola country was in the grip o revolts of the chieftains and the law and order was the country in great turmoil.

He beqeuathed the crown of the Chola country. while he was in the womb of his mother. So he had to fight against the recalcitrant feudatories and the other two kings, before he established his suzerainty over his kingdom. He fought against the chieftains at *Vennil*, and this seems to be the second battle at the same place like war of panipet I and war of panipet II in the history of Northern India

The Poet *Paranar* did not mention the names of the eleven velirs and two kings. but simply gives their total number and expresses that they were defeated in a pitched battle[28].

In another poem in *Pattuppattu* he has been praised for his mighty power in subduing *Olivar, Aruvalar, Vadavar* (Vadukar?) Ku:avar (the Cheras) and defeated *Tennavan* (Pandiyan). He also established overlordship over *Irunkovel*[29]

After establishing his supremacy over the length and breath of Tamilnadu, *Karikala* II had a victorious expedit on into the North and inscribed his insignia on the rocks of the Himalayas and brought a new awareness in the minds of the rulers of North India.[30]

He extended his power over *Tondaimandalam*, which was ruled by a vassal of the Chola king called *Ilantiraiyan*.[31]

Paranar, Urittirankannanar, Kappigarrukkappiyanar and *Mamulanar* were the significant poets, who lived in the age of *Karikala* II. They have referred in their Poems more than twenty chieftains as their contemporaries.

They were (a) Nannan II[32], (b) Katti II[33], (c) Tittan II[34], (d) *Titiyan* I[35] (e) *Panan* I[36] (f) Nailli I[37], (g) *VelaviK Koman Patuman*[38], (h) *Vandan*[39], (i) *Nedumidal*[40], (j) *Pindan*[41] (k) *Kannan Elini*[42], (l) *Nedu velavi*[43], (m) *Pulli*[44] and (n) *Tirayan*[45]. These were the more powerful chieftains of this period.

Generation V

Feudatories In the Epoch of Senguttuvan (A.D. 105-159)

From the fifth section of *Patirruppattu*, we know that *Paranar* the celebrated poet of *Karikala* II, adorned the court of *Senguttuvan*. The heroic exploits and the munificence of *Senguttuvan* are recorded by *Paranar* in glowing terms, in the fifth section of *Patirruppattu*.

In the poems of *Paranar*, one can find more than 50 chieftains either celebrated or allowed to. If we analyse the information supplied by *Paranar* in his poems with great care and consideration. I hope that we can get more light to understand the intricate problems involved in the study of the chieftains of the *Sangam* Age.

One can easily understand from the poems of *Paranar*, "he was endowed with a longer life than any other poets" of that period. We can infer from the verses of *Paranar*, that he might have lived from the last days of *Karikala* I, to the middle of the reign of *Senguttuvan*.

He has recorded in his poems, the important events occurred from the pre-*Karikala* times to the hey days of *Senguttuvan*.

In one of his verse, he makes reference to *Alici* of *Arkkadu*. But it appears an event of the hoary-past.[46] So, it is reasonable to regard him as a chieftain of pre-karikala period.

Paranar points out one *Tittan* I and his daughier *Aiyal* in one of his verses[47]. He says that this *Tittan* I was the ruler of *Uraiyur*. But these two royal personages also appears to have lived before the days of *Paranar*.

He celebrates one *Pacumupun* Pandiya, in one of his poems. *Atikan*, the chief of the *Pacumpun* Pandiya, fought against *Konkar* at *Vakaipparantalai*. This important event has been recorded by Paranar, in one of his poems. This *Atikan* may be called the *Atikan* I. He was the chief of *Venkai* hills. He is quite different from *Atiyaman Neduman Anci who*[48] is known as *Atikan* or *Atiyaman* II. We learn from the literary evidence

that *AtiKan* I appears to have died in the above mentioned battle.[49]

Another chieftain of this period is Evvi.[50] He was the baron of *Nidur*, a village in the Thanjavur district. This name *Evvi* can be considered as a proper name. This feudal lord was a great patron of bards and artistes. He was also not a contemporary of *Paranar*. So, we may call him as Evvi I.

Ori, was one of illustrious philanthropists of this period. He was the ruler of *Kollimalai* region. Paranar has celebrated this chief and his hills in glowing times. But, there is no evidence to establish that he was a contemporary of Ori[51] While *Tittan Veliyan* was the lord of *Uraiyur*, a minor chieftain called *Katti* escaped from the prisons of *Uraiyur*. This incident has been referred as a past event by *Paranar*.

From the previous referenees it is appropriate to term this *Tittan* as *Tittan* II and *katti* as *Katti* I.

Nalli, another philanthropist of the *Sangam* age seems to be the contemporary ot *Paranar*. Besides this bard, *Kapilar* and *Kakkaippadiniyar* have celebrated this chief in some of their poems. He was the earliest person of that name. So we call him as *Nalli* I.

In a number of verses, *Nannan* refers, to one *Nannan*, of we analyse the available source materials about *Nannan*, we can easily distinguish four persons of that same name.[53]

The earlest *Nannan* was known as *Nannan Utiyan*, who may be called *Nannan* I. He was a vassal to the Chera King. He fought against Karikala I. The chief of the towns *Pali* and *Param* (in the South Kanara district) was also known as *Nannan*. We may treat him as *Nannan* II [55] Ay *Eyinan* (Ay II) was his intimate friend. Both of them joined together to defend *Pali* from the onslaught of *Minil*. In this skirmish Ay II lost his life.[56]

There was another *Nannan*, who has earned a notorious name as 'one who had killed an innocent girl.'[57] *Paranar* rebukes him

with an askance. He would have been *Nannan* III. Most probably; he might have been a contemporary of *Paranar*.[68]

Paranar has praised the munificence of *Pekan*. He had made reunite *Pekan* with his wife *Kannaki*. In this endeavour, the poets *Aricil Kilar*, *Perunkunrur Kilar* and *Kapilar* have associated themselves with *Paranar*.[59] There are a number of verses in *Purananuru* speak about this Herculean task of these poets.

From the poems of *Patirruppattu*, we are inclined to think that *Kapilar* would have been an junior contemporay of *Paranar*. But, *Perunkunrur Kilar* appears to have been a senior to *Kapilar*.

Besides these Chieftains, Paranar has given brief notes about a large number of petty rulers of the *Sangam* age. They *Ay Andiran* or *Ay* III[60] *Ay Eyinan (or) Ay* II[61] *Arukai*[62] *Talumpan*[63], *Viraan*[64], *Viccikko* I[65], *Palaiyan* II[66], *Malaiyaman Tirumudikkari*[67], *Nalladi*[68], *Tithiyan* I[69], *Kanaiyan* II[70], *Kaluvul* I[71], *Panan* I[72], *Minlli*[73], *Nimili*[74], *Akutai*[75], *Eyinan*[76] *Matti*[77], *Attan Attl*[78], *Konkar*[79], *Kocar*[80], *Velir*[81] and etc.

Among them, *Malaiyaman Tirumudikkari* was known to certain extent to this poet.[82]

Kapilar celebrates *Kari* in a number of verses.[83] In the same way, *Kalladanar*, *Kirattanar* of *Kuduvayil*, *Kovur Kilar*, *Peruncattanar* and poetess *Nappasalivar* have recorded the heroic exploits and unstinching liberality of *Kari* in a number of verses.[84]

Generation VI

Vallal Pari and his Contemporaries

We could not find out the successors of *Senguttuvan* and their contemporay *Chola* and *Pandiya* monarchs with a sense of certainty.

Probably *Nalankilli* and *Killivalavan*, who were eulogised by *Kovur Kilar* might have been the rulers of the Chola Kingdom during this epoch. But, the senior contemporary of *Kovur Kilar* and the eminent poetess *Avvaiyar* was Kapilar, intimate friend, philosopher and guide of Pari. From the decad of Patirruppattu composed by Kapilar, it is clear that *Selvakkadungo Valiyatan* was the ruler of the Chera realm after the death of *Pari*,

In two of his verses, Kapilar mentions *Irunkovel* II[85], the remote ancestor of the *Irukkuvelirs* in the age of the Imperial Cholas.

Pari was the Prince among the philanthropist of the Sangam Age, whose life has become a theme for the sagas of the subsequent periods in the history of Tamilnadu. He was a friend, patron and a great hero to the poet *Kapilar*.[86]

He records with great sorrow the massacre of *Ori* of *Kalli* hills by *Kari*.

As we have noticed earlier *Aricil Kilar* was the contemporary of Kapilar. He has witnessed the pitched battle at *Takadur* between *Atiyaman* (Atikan II) and his invincible enemy *Perunceral Irumporai* of the Chera country. He also records the death of the valiant chief of the Chera army in the battle.[88]

The ninth decad of *Patirruppattu* was composed by the poet *Kilar* of *Perunkunrur*.

He points out the status and relationship of *Kilan* of *Maiyur* with the Chera King of that times. The name of the Chera monarch was *Kudakko* Ilanceral *Irumporai*. He had to fight against one *Palaiyan Maran*, the younger.[89] We can treat this *Palaiyan Maran* as the Palaiyan III *Nakkirar*, the poet of the next generation has also makes reference to this *Palaiyan* III[90].

Kovur Kilar, a poet from *Aruva* Nadu, praises the chola monarches *Nalankilli* and *Killivalavan*. He also refers *Tennan-poruppan*[91], and *Pannan* of *Sirukudi*[92] (Pannan I). Scholars believe that *Killivalavan* would have been the son of *Nalan killi*.

Killivalavan defeated *Kari* and killed him in a battle. In order to quench his thirst of personal animostly, he wanted to kill the children by trampling at the feet of an elephant. The poems of *Kilar* of *Kovur* are the unfailing evidence to the treacherous act of this Chola King.[93]

Another poet who was known as *Madalan* of *Madurai* has also composed some verses in praise of *Killivalavan*.[94]

The same poet has eulogised *Kuttuvan Kothai*[95] of the chera family, *Toyan Maran*[96], *Enati Tirukkilli*[97] and *Colliya Enati Tirukkuttuvan*[98] in some of his poems.

The poetess Avvaiyar, the Sappho of Tamilnadu seems to have lived in this period *Atiyaman* or *Atikan* II was her great patron. She also adorned the court of *Elini* or *Atikan* III, who was the son and successor of *Atiyaman Neduman Anji*.[99] She also records *Tondaiman*,[100] *Nanjil Valluvan*,[101] *Mudiyan*,[102] *Panan*-II[103] the patrons and feudatories of those days.

Poet *Nappasalaiyar of Marokkam* should have lived during this period He has composed verses on *Killivalavan Aviyan* (on whom Paranar, Kapilar and Kovoor Kilar have also composed verses), *Tirumudikkari*[104] and his successor *Choliya Enadhi Tirukkannan*.[105]

Poet *Kalladanar* has composed verses on *Akutai*,[106] *Ori*[107] *Kari*,[108] *Nannan*-III,[109] *Panan* II[110] and others. Poet *Kathap-pillaiyar*, in his verses has referred to Kandan alias Nanjil Valluvan-I, a contemporary of this period.[111] *Anthuvan*,[112] *Kurumpian*[113] and *Avian*[114] also are contemporaries of this

period. Poet *Ayoor Mudavanar* has composed verses on *Atan Elini* [115] and *Taman Tonrikko*[116].

We learn that all the three dynastic rules viz., Chera, Chola and Pandya have jointly besieged the Hill Fort of *Parambu* and later fought with *Pari*[117]. But we do not know by name, exactly who those three rulers were. The above political developments in the Chola Empire and the political situation of Pandyas prevailed during the subsequent period give rise to a thought that *Killivalavan* of Chola dynasty and Pandyan Ariyappadai Kadantha Nedoncheliyan (Nedunchelian-I) would have waged a battle against Part. After the period of *Senguttuvan*, *Vanchi* (Kuttanad) and *Tondi* (Kudanad) areas of Chera Empire were contemporarily ruled by *Kuttuvan Kothai* and *Selvakkadungo Vazhiyathan* respectively[118]. Of these two. the Poet *Kapilar* has composed verses about *Selvakkadungo Vazhiyathan*—Vide Pattitruppattu 61 : 8—10. Though *Kapilar* has composed these verses only after the death of his bossom friend, *Pari*, nowhere he mentioned that *Selvakkadungo Vazhiyathan* is an enemy to *Pari*[119]. Poet *Madalan Madurai Kumaranar* has composed verses in praise of *Cheraman Kuttuvan Kothai* perhaps, might be the Chera King who waged a war against *Pari*.[120]

Through the verses written by Poet *Kapilar*[121] as well as the two daughters of *Pari*[122], we learn that Pari died a death of the brave martyr in the above war. Therefore, there is no direct evidence found in the Sangam Verses available to us to the effect that *Pari* was cunningly[123] killed by the three rulers as alleged by the early commentators of *Purananuru*.

Many belonging to the clans of *Konkar*, *Malavar*, *Kosar* and *Velir* were among the able chieftains of this period.[124]

Further history about the Chieftains after the king pari proceed ss follows It started with the chieftains of the *Pandiyar Nanmaran* followed by *Nedunchezion*-II, *Ukkirap Peruvaluthi* and *Kumanan*. (For details see the Chronological Index of the Chieftains).

Chronological index of the Chieftains

Generation	Name of the King	Name of the Poets who praised the King and the Chieftains	Chieftains
I	The pre-period of Karikala I	1 Sattanthaiyar	1 Alici
		2 Nakkannaiyar	2 Tittan
			3 Centan
II	Karikala I	1 Vennikkuathiyar	1 Nannan I
		2 Karungkuzhalatanar	2 Errai
		3 Kudavayil Keeratanar	3 Atti
		4 Paranar	4 Kankan
			5 Katti
			6 Punrurai
			7 Kanaiyan I
			8 Peruncattan I
			9 Evvi I
			10 Palaiyen I
			11 Konker
III	Ilancetcenni (Uruvappahrer)	1 Perunkunrur Kilar	1 Nannan II
		2 Paranar	2 Palaiyan I
			3 Atikan I
			4 Vicciyar

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			5 Avvaiyar 6o Konker 7 Puliyar 8 Velir
IV	Karikala II (Thirumavalavan)	1 Paranar 2 Urittirankannanar 3 Kappiyarrukkappiyanar 4 Mamulanar	1 Irunkoval I 2 Tondaiman I 3 Nannan II 4 Katti II 5 Tittan II 6 Titiyan I 7 Panan I 8 Nalli I 9 Valavic Koman Paduman 10 Vandan 11 Nedumidal 12 Pindan 13 Kannan Elini 14 Nedu Velavi 15 Pulli 16 Tiraiyan

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			17 Pothuvar
			18 Oliyar
			19 Aruvalar
			20 Kocer
			21 Malavar
			22 Velir
			23 Konger
			24 Tondaiyar
			25 Erumaiuran
V	Cheran Senguttuvan	1 Paranar	1 Nannan I
		2 Kapilar	2 Pekan
		3 Arisilkilar	3 Ay I
		4 Perunkunrur Kilar	4 Kari
			5 Ay II
			6 Ori
			7 Nalli I
			8 Minili
			9 Nannan III
			10 Arukai
			11 Talumben I

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			12 Vira Un
			13 Vichiko I
			14 Palaiyan I
			15 Nalladi
			16 Tithiyan I
			17 Kanaiyan II
			18 Panan I
			19 Kaluvan I
			20 Nimili
			21 Akuthai
			22 Eyinan
			23 Matti
			24 Attan Athi
			25 Kongar
			26 Kosar
			27 Velir
			28 Kattiyar
			29 Pooliyar
VI Pari		1 Kapilar	1 Irunkovel
		2 Arisilkilar	2 Ori
		3 Perunkunroor Kilar	3 Kari

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		4 Kalladanar	4 Athikan II
		5 Avvaiyar	5 Puzhaiyan II
		6 Kovoor Kilar	6 Pannan I
		7 Madurai Kumaranar	7 Toyan Maran
		8 Karur Kathappillaiyar	8 Tirukkilli
		9 Nappasalaiyar of Marokkam	9 Tirukuttuvan
			10 Athikan III
			11 Tondaiman II
			12 Nanjil Valluvan II
			13 Mudiyan
			14 Panan II
			15 Aviyan
			16 Tirukkannan
			17 Nannan IV
			18 Akuthai
			19 Anthuvan
			20 Kurumbiyan
			21 Athan Elini
			22 Taman Tondrikko
			23 Mayoor Kilan

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			24 Tennam Poruppan 25 Mazhavar 26 Kocer 27 Velir 28 Konkar 29 Palaiyar 30 Pari
VII	Pandiyan Nanmaran (Elavanthikai Palli Thunjiya)	1 Kalladanar 2 Moolankilar 3 Karikkannanar of Kavirippoompattinam 4 Perisattanar 5 Nakkiranar	1 Mallikilan Kariyathi 2 Veliyan Vinnanthayan 3 Ay II 4 Pittankorran 5 Kocer 6 Kongar 7 Tondaiyar 8 Erumaiyooran
VIII	Nedunchezhian II (Thalaiyanankanathu Cheruvenra)	1 Kalladanar 2 Nakkiranar 3 Mangudi Marudanar alias Mangudi Kilar 4 Kuramagal Elaveyini	1 Nannan IV 2 Palaiyan III 3 Manaviralvel 4 Eliniyathan of Vattaru 5 Vanan

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			6 Tittiyan II
			7 Athikan III
			8 Irunkovel II
			9 Kodaiporunan I
			10 Aruvanthai Ambarkilan
			11 Poraiyarrukilan
			12 Yevvi II
			13 Panan II
			14 Yeraikon
			15 Nakan Nalaikilan
			16 Toongal
			17 Kocer
			18 Parathavar
			19 Velir
			20 Tondaiyar
			21 Malavar
			22 Tittaiyar
			23 Erumaiyooran
IX	Ukkirapperuvaluthi	1 Avvaiyar	1 Vengaimarban I
	(Karappereyil Kadantha)	2 Nakkiranar	2 Palaiyan III
		3 Maruthan Ilanaganar	3 Aruman

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		4 Ayyoor Mudavanar	4 Talumban II
		5 Alamperisathanar	5 Perunchathan II
		6 Vulochanar	6 Athikan III
		7 Kallil Aththirayanar	7 Kaluvan II
		8 Kunroor Kilar Maganar	8 Nanjil Valluvan II
			9 Pittankorran
			10 Vanan
			11 Anthuvankeeran
			12 Kadalan
			13 Periyan
			14 Kodumudi
			15 Athanungan
			16 Neduvelathan
			17 Tanthumaran
			18 Pannan II
			19 Vanjan
			20 Athan Elini
			21 Venman
			22 Malavar

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			23 Erumaiyooran 24 Kosar 25 Parathavar 26 Velir
X	Kumanan (A period when there was no King or Emperor)	1 Perunthalai Chathanar 2 Perunchitranar 3 Natthathanar 4 Nannakanar	1 Nalliyathan 2 Velliyathan 3 Nalliyakodan 4 Kumanan 5 Ilamkumanan 6 Nalli I 7 Viccikko 8 Kodaiporunan II 9 Moovan 10 Veliman 11 Ilaveliman 12 Karumpanur Kilan

We have seen earlier that the region presently comprise of Nilgiris, Dharmapuri, Coimbatore, Periyar and Salem Districts was known as *"Kongu Mandalam"* towards the end of Sangam Age. The vassals of the Region were known as *Konkars*[123].

Chieftains who ruled *PoozhiNadu* were called *Poozhiyar*[124] The Territory located North of Chera Nadu (Kutta Nadu) and South West of *Konkana Nadu* was called *Poozi* Nadu during Sangam Age. The people of *Poozhinadu* were popular in sheep rearing. By tradition, they were called *Poozhiyar.* Cheras and Nannans evinced keep interest in bringing the above territory under their overlordship.

We have already seen that the Chieftains of the Regions surrounded by many hills and the meeting point of the boundaries of Chera Nadu. Chola Nadu and Kongu Nadu—i.e., the present *Tirukovilur* Taluk—were called *Malaiamans*[125].

It is note worthy that the Chieftains who ruled the Regions like *"Erumai Nadu"*, *Konku Nadu* ' *Poozhi Nadu*'', and *"Malai Nadu"* based on the geographical area, were called *"Erumaiyoorar"*, *"Konkar"*, *Poozhiyar"* and *"Malayamans"* respectively.

The forging account enables us to know about the origin and emergence of the Chieftains of Sangam Age.

(1) Those who possessed the strength and ability to emerge as the leaders of the various Clans alone had the opportunity to become the Dukes.

(2) The Clan leaders of particular Regions were respected as the ultimate leaders of the respective Regions.

(3) Tondaiman *Ilanthirayan*, *Pari*, *Kari*, *Nannan*-IV and the like who rose from one above two conditions and at the same time possessed the requisite courage and strength of the armed forces, attained the eminance as powerful Chieftains based on feudalism.

The three Tamil Kings were Chere, Chola and Pandyas who rose to a position over and above the aforesaid three kinds of Chieftains.

Several subjects of the Chieftains who were of fame and name duting Sangam Age were familiar in the political arena of Tamilagam till the 14th Century B.C. They preserved their ancient fame and traditional glory.

Decendents of the Chieftains of Sangam Age, viz., Chieftain *Ay* (decendants of Ay of Venadu), decendants of *Athiyaman* (Atikan) *Malaiyamans* (Mildudaiyar, Sethirayar), families of *Irunkovels*. (Kodumbalur Irukkuvelir), families of Chieftains known as *Kattiyer* Clan (Katti etc.,), *Vanar* (Vanavarayar), *Mezhavar* (Mazhavarayar) and the like slowly dieappeared from the political arena of Tamilagam noon after the invesion by Islams. It is a surprising news that they have lived and died merely as Chieftains throughout the history of their times. They willingly contributed their intelligence, hardwork, armed forces and wealth in order to preserve the supermacy of Chola and Pandya Kingdoms. They were the pillars of these empires which declined and fell down whenever these Chieftains withdraw their support or whenever their support was treated with contempt. The down fall of the Later Cholas serve as a significant evidence.

The Greatness and glory of the Chieftains :

The aim of the following paragraphs in to indicate the intensive services randered the Chieftains of Sangam Age and the role played by them in the history of Sangam Age.

The Influence of the Chieftains :

During the period of Karikala, the Chieftains of his times colluding the Chera and Pandya Kings tried to arrest the expansion of Chola king. Likewise, Pandya king, *Nedunchezhian* II. when he came to the throne, had to fight against the confederacy of the other two Great Kings and five Chiefains aligned

together. It is mentioned futher that Chere Kings were wearing a garland made up of the crowns of seven Chieftains[126]. These would go to express the greatness and Significance of the Chieftains during Sangam Age.

Whenever they did not want other Kingdom(s) emerging stronger or whenever they wanted to save themselves from danger to their position and supremacy, either one or two of the three great Tamil Kings together approached the power Chieftains requesting their help and ensured their support. The instances that the Great Tamil Kings had to seek the help of the Chieftain (who were independent rulers) for establishing confederacy, themselves are evidences to declare that the Chieftains were powerful and skillfull[127]. These intances make it further evident that the Chieftains were well trained in the art of warefare and were extraordinarily skillfull. They were constantly possessing and preserving an intensively trained armed forces under their rule. Here, we have to bear in mind a fact that unlike in North India, there was no exclusive race or caste in Sangath Tamilagam for the purpose of involving in in the battle fields. We also should not forget this feature of the Tamil Society.

Another fact is also understood from the history of the above Chieftains. Some of the Chieftains in fact prevailed as autonomous and independent rulers. It was according to their own wish that they decided to support one of the Great Kings who were enemies to each other. To that extent the Chieftains enjoyed autonomy and possessed zeal and powerful armed forces. For a long period, *Tondaiman Ilanthiraiyan* was an independent and autonomous ruler. Rights of his rule were restricted only when the hegemony of the *Karikalan*-II was expanded in the North.[128]

The Chieftains of hilly regions were traditionally known as *Malaiyamans.* They were feudatories of Chola Kings. *Malaiyaman Thirumudikkari* was the most significant among the Malaiyamans. He was called '*Thervan Malaiyan*' for the reason that he possessed a strong force of Cars (Thers). He tried to establish his independent self-rule. So, he joined with

Chera King and killed in the battle another Chieftain *Ori*, who was an enemy to Chera King. The region of Kolli Hills belonging to *Ori* was transferred by *Malaiyaman Tirumudikari* to the overlordship of Chera.[129]. On account of this, Chola King, *Killivalavan* got infuriated and route out Kari.

Thagadoor Athiyaman Nedumananchi (Atikaman-II), *Nannan*-II (Konkanankilar) and *Nannan*-III were also Chieftains causing fear of danger to Chera Kings and were frequently causing troubles to them. Sometimes, they even tried to end the suzrainty of Cheras as we have seen earlier. Chera Kings, therefore, were evincing keen interest in suppressing these Chieftains whenever an opportunity was available to do so.

Parambu Hill of *Pari* was under seige by Three Tamil Kings for a long time and defeating Pari at last. The news about this are extensively available in Sangam Literature[130]. These would go to establish that the Chieftain *Pari*, who belong to Velir Clan was an autonomous ruler with great power that he, therefore, happened to be the common enemy for all the three kings in confederacy seiged his Parambu Hill; and that even then they could not defeat him so easily. What exactly was the reason for the above seige? What has been stated by Poet *Nakkirar* in lines 78 : 20--22 of *Agananooru*[131] leads us to infer that *Pari* should have caused a crushing defeat to the three kings in the battle field and that these three should have thereafter concentrated all their forces in a co-ordinated effort and seiged the Parambu Hill in a planned manner, *Pari*, the great warriar, should have faught with them after allowing the seige to continue for long in which battle he should have died a martyr.

Incidents of the above nature suggests that atleast three or four Chieftains should have been more powerful and skillful than the three great Tamil Kings. Further it is understood that such Chieftains were powerful autonomous rulers.

Malaiyaman Thirukannan was the son of *Malaiyaman Thirumudikari*. During his times, one of the Chola Kings

who lost his Kingdom to Pandyas was under asylum in *Muller Forest* belonging to him (Malaiyaman Thirukannan). It is also seen that he fought with Pandyan and restored the kingdom to the Chola King who was under asylum. The title *'Cholia Enadhi'* would go to suggest that Malaiyaman Thirukkannan should have been honoured as the Chief of the Armed Forces of the Cholas, in view of the above rare act. His bravery and courage have been highly praised by the Poets.[132]

From the historic events we have so far surveyed, it is evident that some of the Chieftains of Sangam Age were most powerful. None of them were under the overlordship of even the Three Great Tamil Kings. Further, it is revealed that in the wars that took place to establish political supremacy, the Chieftains played a powerful role.

Evidances are available in Sangam Literature that the autonomous entities of the Chieftains were, at times, the stumbling blocks when the Three Great Tamil Kings endeavoured to establish a single Tamil Empire.[133]

Battles were too many during the Sangam Age. Most of them were between the Chieftains and the Great Tamil Kings The Chieftains functioned with an institution to establish independent and autonomous rules destroying the supremacy and overlordship of the Three Great Tamil Kings whose declining power brought them towards a total fall This tendency might be attributed towards the frequent wars in those times. Such battles alone paved way for the decline and fall of the Three Great Kings of Tamil. This fact could not be contested or suppressed. Nor could we forget this. In view of the fact they could not enlist the support and help of the Chieftains in terms of armed forces, the tradition of the Three Great Tamil Kings started losing their power and moved towards total disappearance in due course.

A doubt may arise whether at all the Chieftains had contributed in any manner what so ever towards the stability and growth of the Kingdoms of the Three Great Tamil Kings. It can be established beyond doubt that they did contribute to

a great extent. The Chieftains were also responsible for the frequent changes in the territories of the Tamil Kings is a fact which no one could refute.

Patrionising the Arts :

Sangam Age was also heroic epoch of Tamils. They valued the honour showered on them in praise on them in praise of their heroic deeds. They cherished the life of bravery and courage[134]. They respected those who came forward to sacrifice their lives for sake of fame.

The Chieftains were not only the brave warriors of high order but also were unparallel philonthrophist in patronising Poets, Panars, Padinis and Porunars. On the otherhand they considered it as a sacred duty.

The Poet Paraner prasises the Chieftains Pekan for his act of giving away his shawl to a peacock which was shivering in cold in a forest[135]. The Chieftains were more keen in helping those who suffer than their keeness in destroying their enemies in the battle fields. It was, ther fore, the custom of the Poets to often praise them as those who lived not for themselves but only for others[136]

Pekan gave his shawl to a peacock, *Pari* of Parambu Hills spared his own car to a mullai flower plant in a forest which was struggling without a supporting staff; *Kari* donated gold and money endlessly; *Ay* donated everything except the 'Tali' (Mangala Sutra) of his wife; *Athiyaman* (Athikan-II) gave away to Poet *Avvaiyar*, the rare black fruit of emblic myrobalan tree which is helpful to enhance one's intelligence. *Nalli* (Nalli-II) was giving to all those who approached him without uttering 'NO' to anyone; Ori attained fame by giving away to Panars and artists all those available in his Kingdom[137] Once the head of the chieftain *Kumanan* was prized. He urged one of the Poets who was in acute poverty to get a prize by taking away his head[138].

These Chieftains did not live under a sort of trader's exchange motive that what they give away any in this birth

will help them after death[139]. The aim was to patronise arts, the intention was to help those deserve, and compassionate heart that those who were born to live should never die on account of poverty are the motivating forces which have prompted the Chieftains to live with a motto that to give is the ultimate use of wealth. It is true that their act of compassion and philonthrophy brought them fame. But they did not indulge in such acts with a motive to attain fame and popularity.

Warriors with Compassion

Nilakanta Sastri says that Pari's act of sparing his own car to mullai may appear meaningless to the people of present day[140]. In this connection it is worth while to recall that *Albert Switzer* was honoured for his 'reverence for life'[141]. He did yeoman service for lepers. He refused to walk over the meadows for the reason it will hurt the greens. Can we now agree that the present day modern and scientific world which acknowledges the reference for life of Albert Switzer as exhibited by Pari[142] and Pekan[143] as meaningless? They are also expression of compassion.

APPENDIX

A. CHIEFTAINS

1 Akuthai
2 Aththi
3 Athikan-I (Chief of Vengai Hills)
4 Athikan II (Athiyaman Nedumananchi)
5 Athikan III (Pokuttu Elini)
6 Anthuvan
7 Anthuvankeeran
8 Aruman, Atti
9 Aruvanthai Amparkilan
10 Avvaiyar
11 Alici (Arcot)
1. Arukai
13 Attan Atti
14 Attan Elini (Cellikonam)
15 Athanunyen
16 Ay I (Ay Antiran)
17 Ay II (Ay Elinan)
18 Irunkovel I
19 Irunkovel II
20 Ilamkumaran
21 Ilanthirayan (Tondaiman)
22 Ilaveliman
23 Eyinan
24 Yevvi I (Prior to the period of Needur Kilan)
25 Yevvi II (Belongs to the period of Nedunchezhian II)
26 Eliniyathan of Vattaru
27 Eraikkone
28 Yerrai
29 Ori (Valvil)
30 Katti I
31 Katti II
32 Kadavan
33 Kannan Elini
34 Kanaiyan I
35 Kanaiyan II
36 Karumbanur Kilan
37 Kaluvul I
38 Kaluvul II
39 Kari (Malayaman Tirumudi)
40 Kariyathi (Mallikilan)
41 Kumanan
42 Kurumbian
43 Kodumudi
44 Kodaiponnan I (Kadia Neduvettuvan)
45 Kodaiporunan II (Panni)
46 Chenthan (Uranthai)
47 Nimili
48 Thanthumaran
49 Talumpan I
50 Thalumpan II
51 Taman Tonrikko
52 Tittan I
53 Tittan II
54 Tithiyan I
55 Tithiyan II
56 Tirukkannan (Chozhia Enadhi)
57 Tirukkilli
58 Tirukkuttuvan (Chozhia Enadhi)
59 Toongal
60 Tennamporuppan
61 Tondaiman II
62 Toyan Maran
63 Nalladi (Vellankilan)

64 Nalliyakkodan
65 Nalli
66 Nalli I (Kandeerakko)
67 Nalli II (Ilamkandeerakko)
68 Nannan I (Udhiyan)
69 Nannan II (Konkanankilan)
70 Nannan III (Disregerded the Poets—Woman murderer)
71 Nannan IV (Chenkan Muthuvel)
72 Nagan, Nallikan
73 Nanjil Valluvan I (Kanthan)
74 Nanjil Valluvan II
75 Nedumidal
76 Neduvelathan
77 Pannan I (Sirukudikilan)
78 Pannan II (Vallarkilan)
79 Palaiyan I
80 Palaiyan II
81 Palaiyan III (Ilam Pazhaiy Maran)
82 Panan I
83 Panan II
84 Pari (Vel)
85 Pittankorran
86 Pindan
87 Pulli (Kalvarkoman)
88 Punrurai
89 Periyan
90 Perumahathan I (Son of Olaiynr Kilar)
91 Perunchathan II (Pidavurkilan)
92 Pekan (Velavikkoman)
93 Peraiyarruk Kilan
94 Matti
95 Manaviralvel (Alumbilvel)
96 Minili
97 Mudiyan
98 Moovan
99 Maiyurkilan
100 Vancan (Cheramaan)
101 Viccikko I (Vichiyar Perumalian)
102 Vichikko II (Perumthalai Chathanar)
103 Vinnanthaiyan (Pooncharrur Kanniyan Parpan)
104 Vira Un
105 Villiyathan
106 Veliman
107 Vengaimarpan
108 Velman (Veliyan)
109 Velavikkoman (Pathuman)

The Clans of Chieftains

1 Eyinar
2 Oliyar
3 Kankar
4 Kattiyar
5 Kallar
6 Kuravar
7 Kocer
8 Tondaiyar
9 Paratavar
10 Panar
11 Potuvar
12 Malavar
13 Vanar
14 Velir

The Clans of Tribal Chief

1 Aruvalar
2 Erumaiurar
3 Konkar
4 Puliyur

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